



THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Mainly dry

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my search
for comfort
the long weekend



My father:
the man I fell
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Millions to lose money on pensions

EXCLUSIVE by Nic Cicutti, Personal Finance Editor

Hundreds of thousands of personal pensions sold last year by many of Britain's biggest insurers will be worth less than the amount paid in contributions, an investigation by *The Independent* reveals.

In many cases, the value of policyholders' funds will only be worth a fraction of total payments into the scheme because massive up-front charges have been deducted by insurers.

Those most likely to be affected are people who are made redundant, women who take career breaks to look after children, and those who find work in which they are able to join alternative company schemes.

Research commissioned by *The Independent* also shows that many hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money are poured by the Government each year into meeting these high policy charges.

More than £4.5bn of contributions into personal pension funds in 1995-96 came from tax and National Insurance rebates, almost twice the amount paid in by policyholders themselves, according to figures from the Inland Revenue.

Pension premiums paid by individual policyholders are matched by rebates worth up to 66 per cent of total contributions. Taxpayers are therefore indirectly subsidising the profits made by many companies.

Philip Relford, senior researcher at the Consumers Association, says: "In these cases what is 'We are making sure that we are making a profit come what may.' The tax relief helps in that process."

Harriet Harman, Labour's

social security spokeswoman, said yesterday: "These figures are shocking. They show that people are getting incredibly poor value for their hard-earned savings."

A joint investigation by *The Independent* and Granada's *World in Action* programme, to be shown on Monday, reveals that many companies with the highest sales and the best-known brand names are guilty of the same poor standards.

'People are getting incredibly poor value for their hard-earned savings'

The analysis, carried out by John Chapman, a former Office of Fair Trading official, shows that of 903,000 new policies taken out in 1995, at least 307,000 will have an investment worth less than the total amount paid in premiums over two years. This is an average for the industry, and many firms have much worse records.

The list of high-charging companies includes household names such as Allied Dunbar, Albany Life, Cornhill, Guardian, Scottish Life, Black Horse Financial Services, an offshoot of Lloyds Bank, and Sun Life.

For example, total payments of £2,400 into a pension from Black Horse may only be worth £734 after two years, even assuming investment growth of

9 per cent for each of those years. With one company, Old Mutual, the total is just £376.

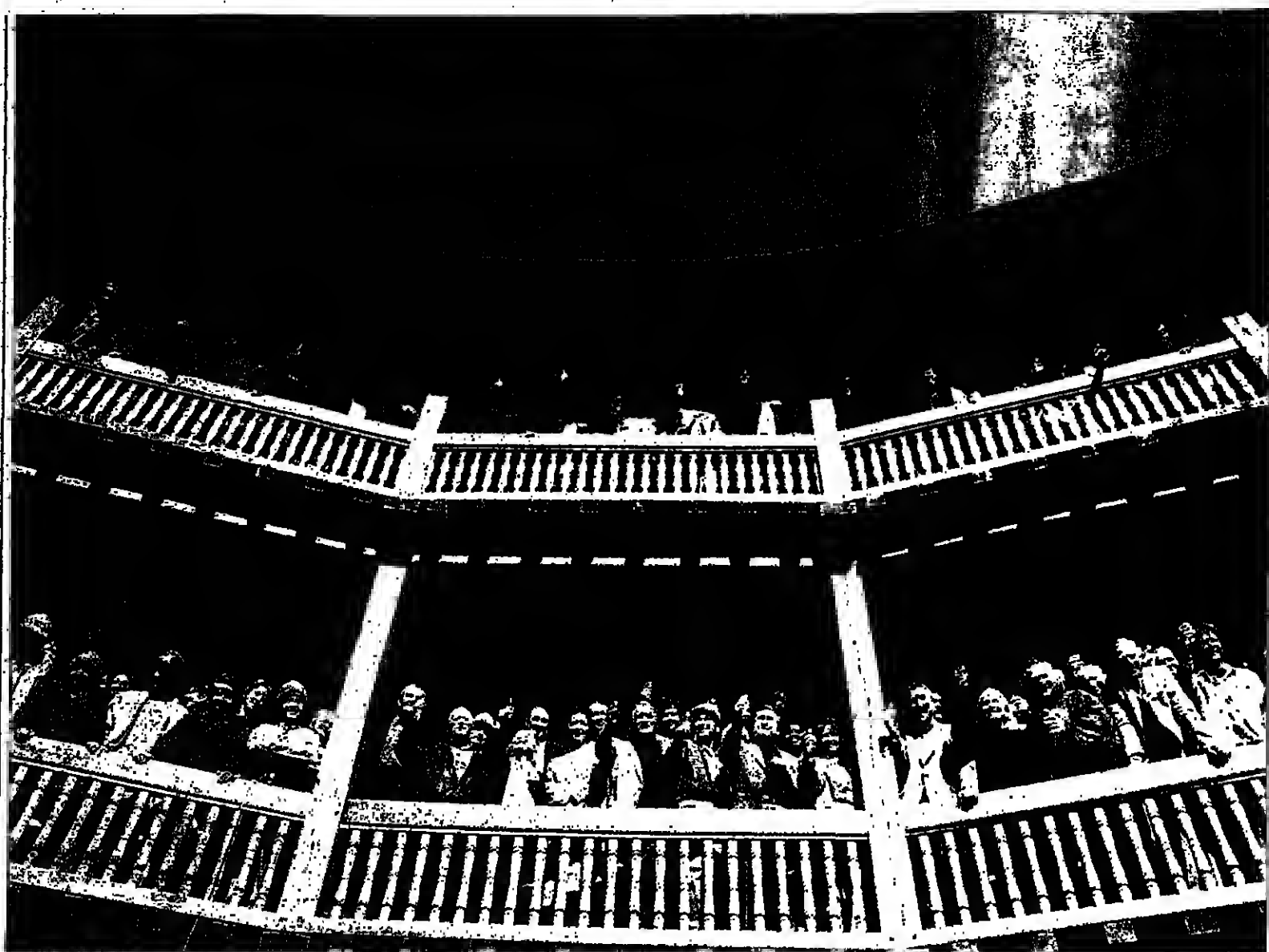
The potential losses for tomorrow's pensioners are caused by the extremely high lapse rates on most personal retirement contracts. On average, 25 per cent of policyholders halt payments into schemes they buy from insurance salespeople within two years of starting them. For financial advisers, the figure is 15 per cent. Thereafter, "lapse rates" generally continue at about 6 per cent a year.

It can take up to 10 years with some companies before "break-even", the point at which the pension is worth the same as contributions. The lapse rates allow companies to promise fantastic maturity values on their pensions - though they are paid to a tiny minority of customers.

Mr Chapman's findings come as the insurance industry has come under unprecedented attack over the mis-selling of personal pensions to more than 1.5 million people between 1988 and 1993. Barely 8,000 victims have been compensated. More than double that number have died before receiving redress.

A spokeswoman for the Association of British Insurers, the industry trade body, said: "Pensions are a long-term investment. If someone does not have the intention of making contributions over the longer term, they should not be buying one and they should not be sold one. However, many companies are increasingly offering more competitive pension contracts, which shows that the industry is changing," she added.

Long Weekend, pages 23-26
Business comment, page 23



At the first stage: Actors, staff and builders through the Globe Theatre, in London, at the beginning of a new season Photograph: Andrew Buurman

Blair has trouble with his kilt

Steve Boggan
Colin Brown and
Anthony Bevins

Tony Blair was wrong-footed for the first time in the election campaign last night as he faced a two-pronged attack over Scottish devolution. As the Labour leader launched his party's Scottish manifesto in Glasgow, he looked distinctly uncomfortable in the face of fierce questioning on his proposed Scottish parliament.

The day had started badly for Mr Blair after he compared the parliament's powers with those of an English parish council in an interview with the *Scottishman*, adding: "Sovereignty rests with me as an English MP and that's the way it will stay." His remarks were attacked by the Tories as "indiscreet" and "patronising", and by the Scottish Nationalist Party's leader, Alex Salmond, who said they exposed the "decree" of Labour's policy.

Mr Blair was clearly rattled by questions from Scottish journalists on whether Westminster would be able to veto the tax-raising powers of a Scottish parliament. He was unable to answer the question, or others on how the parliament's power would square with his pledge to hold income tax down.

His body language, so assured during the campaign so far, was defensive and he resorted to snapping condescendingly at several persistent inquirers.

"Look," he said repeatedly and in increasingly exasperated tones, "I have pledged not to raise the basic and top rates of tax in Scotland as well as England and Wales. I can't speak for the other parties; you have to ask them what they would do."

Mr Blair said there was a difference between having tax-raising powers and using them, adding that Labour would not raise taxes and so would not use a Scottish parliament's tax-raising powers.

Asked about sovereignty, he replied: "We are offering devolution, not separation. That means local services would be run here in Scotland and the rules and laws applied to them can be made in Scotland. But it is not separation and it is not the break-up of the UK."

It was his toughest grilling so far and it ended with the Scottish press corps declaring themselves unhappy with his answers. The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, claimed Mr Blair had "shown his contempt and derision for Scotland."

"New Labour's devolution policy is now exposed by Blair for what it has always been - a deceit which would return to Edinburgh less power than an English parish council," he said.

John Major was quick to seize the opportunity to attack Labour. Clearly sensing serious vulnerability over the cracks in Labour's campaign, the Prime Minister went on to the offensive in some of the strongest language he has used in the

election. "What is clear is their policies are in total and utter chaos as far as Scotland is concerned. They say one thing in England and another thing in Scotland," he said. Earlier, Mr Major had warned of the danger of an English backlash against the Scots. He said that he did not want to see 290 years of Union put in jeopardy.

Jim Wallace, leader of the

Scottish Liberal Democrats, said people had a right to decide through the ballot box whether they wanted the parliament to vary taxes. "The tax powers of the Scottish Parliament are every bit as much an issue of democracy as they are of taxation," he said. "Mr Blair is showing more interest in middle England voters than he is in Scottish democracy."

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QUICKLY

New tax terror
In 8 million households across Britain, a new terror will land on the hallway mat next week. In the shape of the new Inland Revenue self-assessment tax return. The Institute of Chartered Accountants has launched a campaign to encourage taxpayers to seek the advice on the forms - from chartered accountants. Page 5

Millennium merchants
British companies are planning to sell everything from cars to deodorants, flowers to exotic holidays by cashing in on the millennium and what they hope will be a frenzy of consumers looking to buy a slice of history. Page 6

Zaire at bay
In a few months Zaire's rebel forces have snatched vast swathes of territory from the country's once-mighty dictator, President Mobutu Sese Seko, and are advancing on the southern, mineral-rich provinces of Kasai and Shaba, threatening the diamond mines which have served as his personal bank for three decades. Page 15

Ashdown: Our learning society

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

A £10bn package of investment in education, to make Britain the world's "Number One Learning Society", was offered by Paddy Ashdown yesterday as the centrepiece of the Liberal Democrat manifesto.

Launching the manifesto, *Make the Difference*, the Liberal Democrat leader said: "Our £10bn programme of investment in education over the next five years will deliver real improvements in our children's education."

The manifesto offered new books and equipment for schools to the tune of £110,000 more for a secondary school with 1,000 pupils, and an extra £16,000 for primaries with 250 pupils; a cap of 30 on class sizes for children between five and 11; and a guarantee of nursery education for all children of three and four.

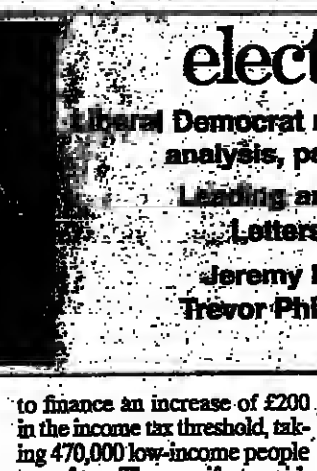
Mr Ashdown said: "As a nation, we cannot afford to let



standards in our schools drop any lower."

The manifesto also contained a costed programme for the National Health Service, with more doctors and nurses, a six-month limit on the waiting time for hospital treatment and free eye and dental checks.

Mr Ashdown and colleagues



to finance an increase of £200 in the income tax threshold, taking 470,000 low-income people out of tax. The manifesto said: "This will provide lower taxes and new incentives to work while cutting the benefits bill and reducing tax for 99.5 per cent of all income taxpayers."

In fact, when a 1p increase in income tax rates is taken into account, the measure needed to finance more education spending - half the remaining 25 million taxpayers will be worse off.

election '97
Liberal Democrat manifesto, details and analysis, pages 12 and 13
Leading article, page 19
Letters, page 19
Jeremy Paxman and Trevor Phillips, page 21

But that is not made clear for another 14 pages of the manifesto.

Mr Ashdown says in a foreword: "Eighteen years of Conservative government have left our society divided, our public services run down, our sense of community fractured and our economy under-performing."

He complained of a fatalism infecting politics. "Though the challenges are immense, the solutions we are offered are all too often puny," he said.

"We are told we can't ask people to pay more for a better education. Or change the way we live to protect our environment. Or share more to give better opportunities to those who have less. Or modernise our politics to give people more say."

"The Liberal Democrats reject this timidity. We are in politics not just to manage things but to make things happen."

Mr Ashdown said on BBC Radio 5 Live that in local government his party was responsible for £18bn of public spending. And he told Radio 4's *Today* programme his party would be willing to work with others in the new Parliament.

"We are fighting for every seat and every vote in this country and what happens the other side of the election will depend on the result of the ballot box."

But on the same programme, Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, dismissed the Liberal Democrat manifesto promises as "third-party flannel".

UK charity Children's Aid Direct has considerable experience of working in Albania and has a team on the ground. As soon as it is safe to deliver food and other urgently needed aid, this charity will make those deliveries. And they are appealing today for your help to do it.

A donation of £30 could buy enough high-protein food for 136 children. As the crisis deepens, Children's Aid Direct will be doing what they can - will you?

LET ME HELP BRING HOPE TO ALBANIA

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*A gift of £250 or more is worth almost an extra third to us under Gift Aid

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Confusion and chaos are mounting in Albania. According to Albanian government reports, food stocks are down to a tenth of normal levels. Those least able to help themselves will, as ever, be most at risk. Children's hospitals and orphanages do not know where the next food supplies will come from.

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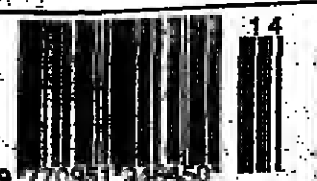
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BNFL fined £20,000 for nuclear danger from bridge

The operators of the Sellafield nuclear plant showed a "total disregard" for repeated warnings that a bridge carrying radioactive waste over a commuter railway line was in danger of collapse, a magistrate said yesterday.

British Nuclear Fuels was fined the maximum £20,000 with costs of £3,344 after pleading guilty at the magistrates' court in Whitehaven, Cumbria, to breaching nuclear regulations.

The court heard that for more than six years the state-owned company failed to act on a series of recommendations to carry out "urgent and immediate" repair work on the 100-metre-long bridge carrying the main low-level radioactive discharge from the plant over the Barrow-to-Carlisle railway line and out to the Irish Sea. There had been the risk that a collapse of the bridge could have caused the pipe to fracture with a leak of radioactive material, Steven Zdolny, for the prosecution, told the court.

Imposing the maximum fine allowable, Frank Hornsby, the magistrates' chairman, said: "The total disregard of reports prepared between 1990 and 1995 recommending urgent remedial action is of grave concern."

Jail for children's embezzler

A children's charity treasurer was jailed for two-and-a-half years yesterday after plundering thousands of pounds.

Bank Clerk Charles Atkinson, 59, helped himself to £109,000 over 10 years either by pocketing cash donations to the Church of England Children's Society or by forging cheques for cash.

Other members of the charity's committee in Canterbury, Kent, were completely unaware of their treasurer's deceit. Atkinson, of St Margaret's Bay, near Dover in Kent, admitted 12 thefts and one forgery between July 1986 and February 1996 and asked for a further 320 offences to be taken into consideration.

The court heard that Atkinson's wife, a retired school teacher, and his two children had no idea what he was doing. Atkinson was appointed treasurer of the charity in 1978 by virtue of his position as a senior clerical assistant at the National Westminster Bank, in Canterbury, where he had worked since 1955. NatWest has since reimbursed the charity, plus £22,000 in interest and a further £4,700 to meet their solicitor's cost.

Frank discussions on Broadway



Mary Poppins told a fib? Surely not! But that is what is being suggested in a squabble underway between the insurance industry and the producers of the Broadway spectacular *Victor/Victoria*.

Neither side was talking yesterday, but according to the *Wall Street Journal*, Julie Andrews (left), is accused of being, well, not entirely frank when she completed forms to buy insurance for the show. The policy is meant to pay out as

much as \$8.5m (£5.3m) if she is felled by illness. At issue, it seems, is the denial Ms Andrews gave when asked if she had ever suffered from any respiratory illnesses. Ms Andrews, whose husband, Blake Edwards, directed the show, responded likewise to questions about "any disease, disorder or injury of the bones, joints, muscles, back, spine, or neck". The exact nature of the dispute is not clear. In making the allegation, the consortium of insurers, led by Lexington Insurance Company, has apparently cancelled the policy, leaving *Victor/Victoria* uncovered. The shocked producers have hit back with a lawsuit. So far, Ms Andrews, 61, has been forced to miss 30 performances since the show's opening in October 1995, because of a variety of ailments. But her defenders will point out that she has turned up for almost 600 of them on a gruelling routine of eight performances a week.

David Osborne - New York

Train driver's trial for manslaughter

The driver of a commuter train that crashed at Watford Junction, killing one passenger, was yesterday committed for trial accused of manslaughter.

Peter Afford, 56, of Bushey, Hertfordshire, was accused of unlawfully killing Hemel Hempstead journalist Ruth Holland, 54, and with endangering passengers' lives by failing to stop at a red signal. Mr Afford, who was employed by North London Railways, was committed to St Albans Crown Court by Watford magistrates.

A pre-trial hearing will be held on 9 May. The crash happened on 8 August last year when the 17.04 Euston-to-Watford Junction train, which he was driving, crashed into an empty train at Watford. Seventy passengers were injured.

Jaguar to recall 5,000 cars

Jaguar is to recall nearly 5,000 of its XK8 models, including more than 800 in the United Kingdom, because of a possible rear suspension fault, it was announced yesterday.

The Coventry-based luxury-car company said there had been three minor incidents involving the rear suspension, but there had been no accidents and no one had been hurt. Described as the spiritual successor to the popular E-type of the early Sixties, the XK8 went on sale last October. The coupé version costs around £48,000 and the convertible about £55,000.

Police inquiry into sex assaults

A major police inquiry was launched yesterday into allegations that a serving officer carried out a string of sexual assaults on women.

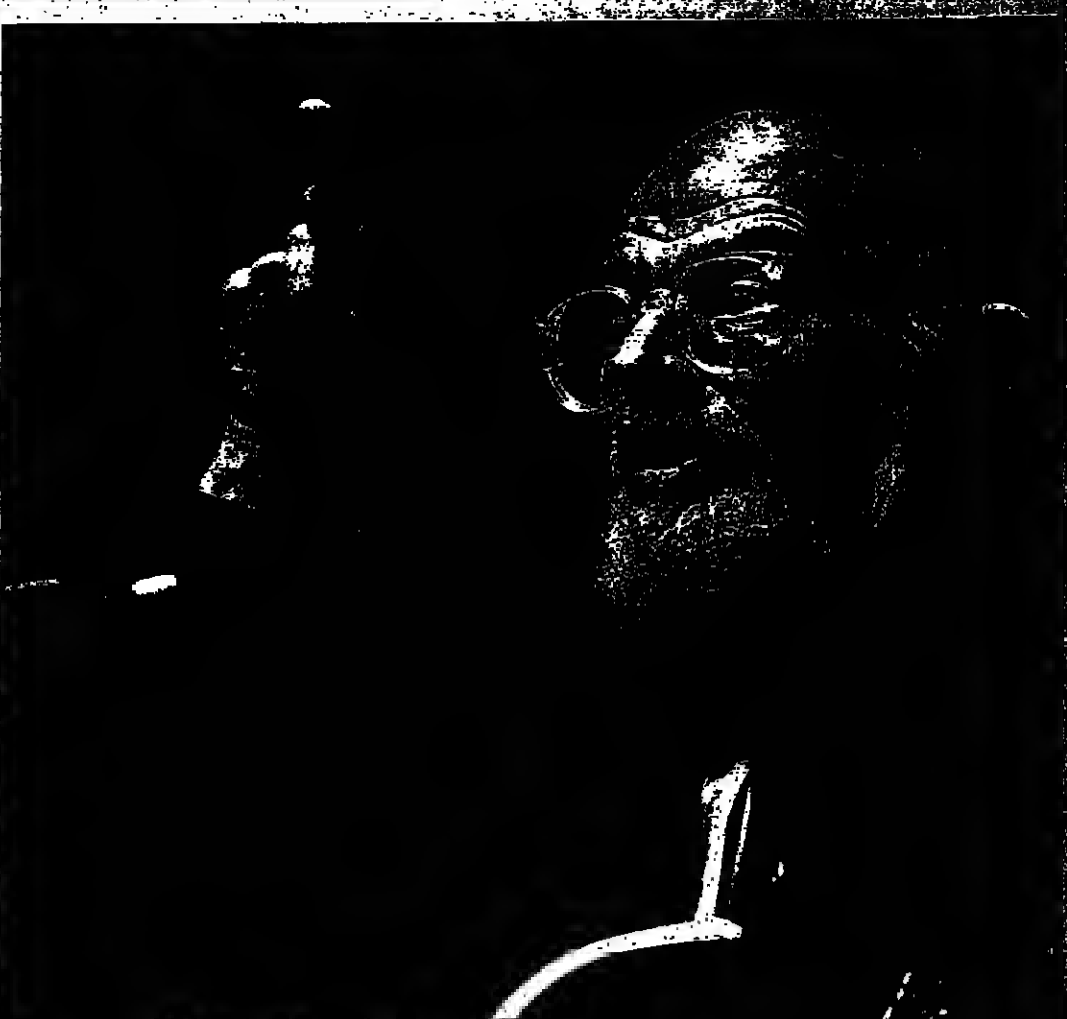
The investigation, by Cleveland Police, is headed by Detective Chief Inspector Dave Martin of the force's Complaints and Discipline Department. The force has called in the Police Complaints Authority to supervise the inquiry. A police spokesman said: "I can confirm that an officer has been suspended pending an investigation into an alleged series of sexual assaults. No charges have yet been made against the officer, who has been released on bail."

Anti-road arrests in Toy Town

Four anti-road protesters were arrested yesterday after police moved in to evict them from a camp known as Toy Town, in Cornwall. Protesters set up camp earlier in the week at Boscombe, near St Austell, on the route of a £7m scheme to link the A390 and A391 roads. Twenty-five police moved in at 6am and asked the six protesters on the site to leave following a complaint from the landowner, a Devon and Cornwall Police spokesman said yesterday.

A 23-year-old woman was arrested for obstruction and taken into custody at Newquay, north Cornwall. Contractors began felling trees at the site at around 7am. Three protesters, who had earlier left the site, were arrested when they returned at 8.30am and attempted to climb trees, said the police. During the night an ambulance was called to the site when a 10-year-old boy fell from a tree. The child was not seriously injured, police said.

people



Allen Ginsberg: Father of flower power plans

Voice of the Beat Generation nears the end with a serene

Allen Ginsberg, the leading voice of the Beat Generation and the man who coined the term "flower power", has been diagnosed with terminal liver cancer, it was announced yesterday. The 70-year-old poet is being cared for in his Manhattan apartment. According to his friend Bill Morgan, he is calmly writing poetry, practicing Buddhist meditation and planning "to finish his life's work".

Ginsberg's raucous rejection of social convention has inspired four decades of hippies, drop-outs and dissidents. His final illness comes at a time when the influence of the Beats on later counter-cultural movements looks as strong as ever. Director Martin Scorsese's film of *On the Road*, by Ginsberg's friend, collaborator and occasional lover, Jack Kerouac, will open soon. Meanwhile, Bob Dylan - whose style as a lyric writer owes everything to Ginsberg and the Beats - continues to tour around the world and will play at the Flood music festival in London's Finsbury Park in June.

Ginsberg, born in New Jersey in 1926 and educated at Columbia University, sprang into the limelight from the New York artistic underground when he published *Howl* in 1955. His loose-limbed, visionary, mixed-race Howl and Whitman with the delirious jazz culture of post-war Greenwich Village.

Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1926. He was educated at Columbia University and spent time in the Soviet Union. He was a member of the Beat Generation and was known for his poetry and his role in the 1950s New York artistic underground. He was diagnosed with terminal liver cancer and is being cared for in his Manhattan apartment. He is calmly writing poetry, practicing Buddhist meditation and planning "to finish his life's work".

Boyd Tonkin

Delia cooks up a right royal fortune

Delia Smith, the cookery guru and writer, is now as rich as Diana, Princess of Wales, according to the annual Sunday Times Rich List. Diana - who is better off than her former husband - and Delia share the £16th place with £17m each.

The list, which is published tomorrow, claims to be "the definitive guide to Britain's wealthiest and covers the nation's richest 1,000 citizens. If you believe the Sunday Times list, which has been accused of inaccuracy in the past, their combined wealth totals £98,999bn.

Mohammed al-Fayed, the controversial owner of Harrods, who has consistently embarrassed the Government, is finally allowed entry to the list, after a "ringing endorsement" for his inclusion from Tiny Rowland, his former arch enemy.

Doubts have often been raised by Mr Fayed's opponents about whether the money used to buy the Knightsbridge store actually belonged to him, but now the Sunday Times has graciously decided that it does, and puts his wealth at £1,000m.

Among other prominent entries in the list, which is scoured as much by those who appear on it as those who merely aspire, are Lakshmi and Usha Mittal (wealth estimated at £1,500m), husband and wife steel magnates and the highest entry at number eight.



Dr Tony O'Reilly, the Irish businessman whose publishing company is a major shareholder in The Independent, and his wife, Chrissy Goulandra, also join the list

Dr Tony O'Reilly, the Irish businessman whose publishing company is a major shareholder in *The Independent*, and his wife, Chrissy Goulandra, also join the list "because of O'Reilly's continued expansion into the media in Britain". Dr O'Reilly's wealth is estimated at £1,000m.

According to the list the top 500 added £16.299bn in the last year to their respective fortunes, which now total £98.877bn.

Entry to the exclusive top 500 requires a personal wealth of £40m, compared to £25m last year. But the average wealth of the top 500 is put at £173.7m - up £33.7m on last year's average of £140m.

However Britain is still making little impact on the global wealth lists. American billionaires still dominate the world's top 10.

Simon Reeve

Cherie Booth honoured by her peers

Cherie Booth, the QC and wife of Tony Blair, the Labour Party leader, was last night named Legal Personality of the Year in the annual *Lawyer* magazine awards.

The 42-year-old employment and public law specialist broke off from election campaigning to receive the award from comedian Ronnie Corbett at a dinner at the Hilton Hotel, central London.

The predominantly legal readership of the paper was asked to specify the reasons behind their choice of personality. In Ms Booth's case, the collective view was said last night to have been her skills as a barrister and advocate, her commitment and energy and her advancement in her profession - all achieved as a working mother-of-three.

The award follows disappointment in some quarters that she was beaten last year by the former Law Society president, Martin Mears, who shot to prominence solely because of his maverick and views and constant embarrassment of the Chancery Lane establishment. But this year, Ms Booth has the satisfaction of beating nominees such as Michael Howard, the Home Secretary many lawyers love to hate.

She also pipped the (more popular) outgoing Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, and Anthony Julius, polymath and solicitor to Diana, Princess of Wales.

Patricia Wynn Davies

Voice of racing runs his final furlong

Peter O'Sullivan, the "voice of racing", will commentate on his last Grand National today, after keeping punters across the land on the edge of their seats and enthralled by his "hectic drawl" for nearly half a century.

O'Sullivan, who first covered the race in 1947 and started "calling the running" two years later for BBC Radio, has brought his unmistakable voice to every National since the race was first televised in 1960.

As befitting an individual who has become synonymous with the sport, a bronze bust of O'Sullivan will be unveiled at the Aintree racecourse by the Princess Royal. The Princess will then join O'Sullivan in his commentary box for the race.

The Princess is not O'Sullivan's only royal fan: the Queen and the Queen Mother both wrote tributes to him in *Coming To The Last*, a book of tributes published to mark his retirement. Mary Robinson, the Irish President, also reminisces about Saturday after-

noons listening to his voice on a crackling old wireless with her father and brothers.

It is his "clipped, dark brown" voice that has made his commentary so instantly recognisable. Russell Davies described it as "perhaps the only hectic drawl in captivity", while writer Hugh MacKenzie is quoted as saying O'Sullivan is "possibly the most accomplished reader of action operating on any sport in the English-speaking world".

Despite his wealth of experience, O'Sullivan admits to being nervous before the race. "It is something one looks forward to with as much trepidation as expectation. One is always very conscious of the enormous audience - it is not an easy assignment," he said yesterday.

The National is the most popular race in the country, attracting the largest betters as well as the punters who have a small annual flutter.

Simon Reeve

briefing

HEALTH

Laboratory-grown corneas offer hope to thousands

Doctors said yesterday they had repaired the damaged eyes of two patients using cornea tissue grown in the laboratory. The breakthrough offers new hope to thousands of people who were blinded or had their sight impaired by injury or disease and at present cannot expect their sight to be restored.

A team in Italy took tiny pieces of tissue from the edge of the cornea and grew cells from them in laboratory dishes until they formed sheets large enough to graft on to the damaged areas. Their patients were two men who were severely injured at work by chemical burns that had destroyed their corneas.

Writing in the *Lancet*, the researchers, led by Dr Michele De Luca, of the Instituto Dermopatico dell'Immacolata in Rome, said that two years after having the grafts, the lab-grown cells were functioning normally in both men and there was a "striking improvement in patients' comfort and visual acuity".

The tissue used came from an area called the limbus which harbours special "stem" cells capable of multiplying into unlimited numbers of corneal cells. Only a small number of stem cells from an undamaged part of the eye are needed to produce new tissue.

TECHNOLOGY

Virtual migraine machine unveiled

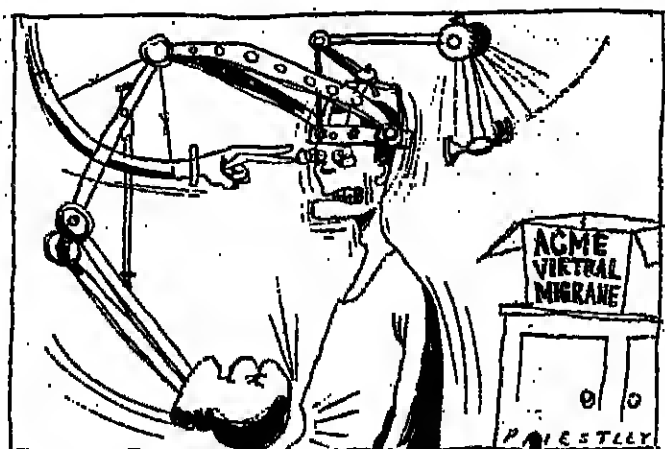
If you don't get migraines but want to find out what it's like, a machine unveiled at the Edinburgh International Science Festival could help you out. Using virtual reality techniques, a new system will recreate the triggers, symptoms and visual disturbances of a migraine - though not the headaches, nausea or vomiting that sufferers often experience.

The four-minute programme first shows wearers of the virtual reality helmet what happens to a migraine sufferer's vision when they feel an attack coming on, and then some indications of the pain and disorientation that sufferers endure in an attack. This is followed by some information about likely causes.

Dr Colin Mumford, consultant neurologist at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh, said: "For many migraine sufferers an attack can be so bad that they can do nothing but lie in a dark room for up to three days while they get over it. But the general public is often quite unsympathetic about the condition. They class it as just a headache with a fancy name and don't understand what actually happens. If this new machine can open their eyes to how debilitating the condition is, then perhaps employers, friends and family will be more sympathetic."

Migraine affects about 10 per cent of the UK population, and women are up to three times more likely to experience it. Attacks last between two and 72 hours.

Charles Arthur



DEFENCE

MPs highlight missing weapons

The Public Accounts Committee yesterday had some faint praise for the MoD's financial management of the British intervention in Bosnia which, it said, had cost £337m from December 1995 to December 1996, plus £25m for air and sea operations. However, it highlighted the fact that paperwork relating to £3.9m worth of ammunition - from rifle bullets to 155mm artillery rounds - had not yet been traced, although 452 Milan anti-tank missiles, worth £6m, had been found.

The MoD said it was confident none of the ammunition had been lost or stolen, and that in the "fast-moving" situation when the Peace Implementation Force arrived in Bosnia, it had been difficult to conduct regular stocktakes.

The PAC report said: "It was to the Department's credit that in spite of all the difficulties they nevertheless imposed on themselves the rigorous standards of peacetime administration and accounting and it was clear that the Department intended to learn from those instances where the arrangements did not work as intended."

The MoD said an investigation into the missing paperwork was still underway, and that when they had established what had happened there would be an inquiry into how the errors occurred.

Committee of Public Accounts, 23rd Report 1996-97, Ministry of Defence: the Financial Management of the former Yugoslavia.

Christopher Bellamy

MEDICINE

Heart drug is more harm than good

A well-established heart disease drug significantly increases the risk of death in seriously ill patients, doctors said yesterday. The finding comes from a European study of the effect of fopamine on the survival of almost 2,000 patients with advanced heart failure. Patients were randomly assigned the drug or an inert placebo. It was found that a quarter of the patients in the fopamine group died, compared with 20 per cent of the placebo group.

The study, originally designed to include 2,200 patients, was stopped early because of the unacceptable number of deaths among those taking fopamine. Previous research has shown that fopamine improves symptoms in patients with mild heart disease. The drug is prescribed as a well-established treatment in several European countries, although not currently in the UK.

The results of this study, headed by Professor John Hampton, of the Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, Queen's Medical Centre, University Hospital, Nottingham, were said to have led to restrictions on its use in countries where it is licensed.

TRAVEL

Celluloid vision boosts holidays

Tourists are turning to two previously unfashionable countries - thanks to a tunnel and a film. Britain's specialist travel bookshops are reporting strong sales of guidebooks to Belgium and Morocco. James Daint, proprietor of the Daint's Books for Travellers in London believes that Eurostar trains to Brussels have put Belgium on the map, with guide books to Bruges selling particularly well.

Interest in Morocco is harder to explain. "It's somewhere we've been selling in enormous numbers", says Mr Daint, who believes the film *The English Patient* may be partly responsible. Even though it is set in Egypt and filmed in Tunisia, the Oscar-winning movie has sparked interest in the whole of North Africa.

Another good indicator of travel intentions is sales of maps at Stanford's, the UK's biggest map and book retailer based in London's Covent Garden. Figures released to *The Independent* yesterday show that the strongest sellers are old favourites. Michelin map 446 to southern Spain and the Touring Club Italiano maps of Umbria and Tuscany.

Simon Calder



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Good Eiggs

Scottish islanders delighted as they win battle to buy their homeland

Matthew Brace

The residents of a wild and beautiful Scottish island, which has been at the centre of a bitter eight-month ownership battle, finally bought their tiny homeland yesterday.

Who should own the small outcrop of Eigg, off the west coast of Scotland, has been the subject of a heated debate since its previous owner, a German artist called Martin Eckhart who owned it for just 15 months, put it up for sale in August last year with an asking price of £2m.

At the time, the islanders' campaign to raise enough money from public donations to buy the island seemed a wild Celtic dream, especially considering the frequency with which wealthy rock stars and businessmen snap up such islands to create private hideaways.

However, against the odds, the members of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust clinched the historic deal in Edinburgh yesterday and the 63 islanders will take possession of the 7,400-acre outcrop on 12 June.

The Trust printed a credit card hotline in national newspapers along with an address for donations. Yesterday they were calling on all those who had made a pledge to honour their promise.

Personal pledges account for £150,000 of the £1.5m raised by the appeal to pay for the island.

About a million was pledged by an anonymous group of a dozen wealthy sympathisers. But more than £400,000 came in relatively small donations, many for just £1.

The National Lottery refused to give the Eigg Trust any money — they had hoped for £750,000 — because it wanted the Trust to be led by wildlife interests and not the islanders.

The islanders, who unsuccessfully tabled a bid for the island thought to be in the region of £1.2m last year but who now own the island in a trust with the Highland Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust, said they were delighted about the news of the sale.

Maggie Fyfe, secretary of the Trust, said: "This is the day we have all dreamt about since we formed the partnership and set out on our journey into the unknown."

"It is a great day, not only for Eigg, but for all communities who live under a landlord's whim. It shows that people in the Highlands and Islands are no longer prepared to be bought and sold like cutlery for their master's table."

"Over the last few months we have had everything thrown into this plot from opera stars to international companies promising the earth. Nobody would have believed the script if Alastair Maclean had written it. But we all stood firm together and won through."

Ms Fyfe added that this was a significant victory for those pushing for land reform in Scotland. "We have shown what is possible and we could not have done it without fantastic public support. People from all walks of life have shown with their donations that they backed us from the start," she said.

"We owe have security of tenure and can get down to controlling our own destinies. Together with the council and the wildlife trust we can now plan a sustainable future for this island and its ecology."

"This is a victory for land reform in Scotland and we are going to have biggest and best party ever here."

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"Everybody oo Eigg has played their part, but there is going to be a lot hard work in store. However, for the moment, we are just celebrating the moment," she said.

Champagne and tears flowed as the islanders celebrated their triumph.

Colin Strang Steel, a partner in charge of the Edinburgh office of the firm of estate agents who had been dealing with the sale of the island, Knight Frank, said yesterday that he was delighted the nine-month battle for Eigg was finally over.

David Irving, reviled and isolated for his views on Hitler and the Holocaust, talks to Marianne Macdonald

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IT IS... ARE YOU?



Vital supplies: Eigg locals unloading beer and food on to the island during their long struggle

Photograph: Paul Reid

Happy ending to a 700-year tale

The long and arduous quest for the island of Eigg, the 'Garden of the Hebrides', has ended in triumph for the islanders who have bought back their homeland from a German artist.

The island, which has been owned by a German artist called Martin Eckhart who owned it for just 15 months, put it up for sale in August last year with an asking price of £2m.

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IT IS... ARE YOU?

Too old at 50? Too young to die ...

Elton John is 50. It's not too old to keep rocking. David Lister reports

Elton John would be unwise to sing his seventies chart topper "Saturday Night's All Right For Fighting" at his birthday party tomorrow night. Fifty is a difficult age for rock stars. And there's nothing the cynics like more than the incongruity of rebel rousing lyrics and paunches and balding pates.

A perception of absurdity persists in the notion of fifty-plus singing rock n' roll. It is a joke never made about jazz or blues artists where it is considered *de rigueur* for the creative juices to continue flowing after the age of fifty. Indeed sometimes they do not even begin until the age of 50. A Sonny Rollins tour receives none of the vitriol or arthritis jokes that accompany The Rolling Stones or Bee Gees.

In other musical genres longevity is a sign of virility. And sex is often a force in jazz and blues lyrics just as in rock music.

Blues guitarist John Mayall has just released his latest album at 54. But this is child's play compared to John Lee Hooker whose latest entitled 'Don't Look Back' will mark his 80th birthday this year. He has no intention of retiring, and is worshipped rather than mocked.

Mat Snow, editor of rock music magazine Mojo, says: "With blues and jazz wisdom and experience become part of the music. One doesn't listen to rock for wisdom and experience. Nevertheless, there is much more acceptance now of older rock stars. Forty was the difficult age psychologically for audiences, the media and the artists. Fifty isn't turning out to be such a problem."

This summer the rock n' roll fiftysomethings are returning with a vengeance. Far from just doing the predictable greatest hits revival tours in money-spinning 'stadia', they are

headlining the open air festivals where the audiences are in their teens and twenties.

David Bowie will top the bill at the Phoenix Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon. At the Fleadh, one of London's trendiest and most boisterous gatherings, Bob Dylan will top the bill, followed by fellow fiftysomething Van Morrison.

One of the Fleadh organisers, Cathy St Luce said: "The music is timeless, and we've found no reaction among our young audiences at all against seeing these people. Indeed they're the people they really want to see on stage."

While Dylan, Morrison and Bowie remain intent on playing to a young audience at youth friendly venues, even more unlikely figures are trying to plug in to a younger market. Housewives favourite Barry Manilow has released a 10 minute techno remix of one of his songs to try to get a hit in the dance clubs.

This is less wise. As John Harris of the dance magazine Select said on the Today programme: "That's the sound of the disco grandad. He is using handclaps and other techniques that were briefly trendy five years ago. It's nowhere near the cutting edge now."

A comment that could be applied to the even more grotesque spectacle of 70-year-old Pat

Boone cutting a heavy metal album.

Though Bowie and to a lesser extent Jagger are fascinated by music on the Internet, trying to be at the cutting edge is a high risk strategy for the fiftysomethings. They continue to draw crowds and critical praise for live shows, but the creative juices fail to flow as well in the studio.

How many Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Elton John or Bob Dylan songs can one remember from the past five years? Yet their early work remains etched on most mental turntables.

Quite why the gift of creating new rock music should desert the rock legends while the ability to give an outstanding live show remains, is a mystery. Pete Townshend of The Who puts it down to a lack of the youthful energy that drives three minute pop songs.

Mat Snow says: "For the most part the song writing gland does tend to dry up, but that's not unique to rock music. How many Broadway composers kept churning it out after 50? And live shows have



Wrinkly rockers still hitting the road (left to right): Elton John, David Bowie, Van Morrison and Barry Manilow. Forty was the difficult age psychologically for audiences. Fifty does not seem to be so difficult



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other advantages. For those who play the conventional stadium and "middle aged gigs" rather than the youth festivals there is increasingly sound business sense for ageing rockers to keep going. The National Music Festival last year featured Dylan, The Who and Eric Clapton, and saw the largest number of corporate hospitality packages ever at a British rock concert.

Eveo The Who, whose leader Pete Townshend vowed never to "try to relive my youth" by touring again, have been wooed by a mixture of money and fan demand back on to the road.

But if rock stars have got over their psychological crises and are happy to perform into their fifties and even sixties, it is hard to ignore one overwhelming factor. All the fiftysomethings are male. From Sandie Shaw to Abba, the chanteuses of previous decades have all left the limelight. The omens are not good for The Spice Girls graduating to Old Spice.

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news

Every second counts as Britain sells off the millennium

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

In a move that will confirm the fears of those worried about the commercialisation of everything, the Old Royal Observatory in Greenwich announced yesterday that it is looking for someone to sponsor time.

In fact it is looking for lots of sponsors who will pay to attach their names to the 1,000 days that are left between today and New Year's Eve 1999.

The initiative is part of Meridian 2000, a marketing operation set up by the Old Royal Observatory, part of the National Maritime Museum, to exploit Greenwich's zero degree longitude position on the meridian.

Meridian 2000 hopes to attract companies with names and numbers that will be significant to them - the company is already hopeful about selling day 57 to Heinz to tie in with its 57 Varieties brand and Boeing has expressed an interest in buying day 737.

More obscurely, Xerox is interested in days that relate to the model numbers of its range of photocopiers.

Since no one has yet found a way to copyright time, Meridian 2000 is offering the Old Royal Observatory as a venue for corporate hospitality on the days bought, and is allowing the sponsoring companies to use the Greenwich Meridian logo.

The Greenwich logo allows brands to promote themselves

A thousand days up for grabs as new Century fuels drive for funds

as officially connected with the millennium.

"We think people will like the fun concept of being able to buy a day," said Laura Weston, the National Maritime Museum's spokeswoman. "It's not all commercial, we are making day 1,000 an open day for the public and day 999, Sunday, is given free to the emergency services."

Members of the public will also be able to hire the observatory - from around £3,500 for the day - if they want to mark significant dates such as wedding anniversaries.

"We're hoping to offer something practical to the companies who have a vague idea that they should be doing something related to the millennium," said Simon Gillespie whose corporate hospitality company is selling off the 1,000 days.

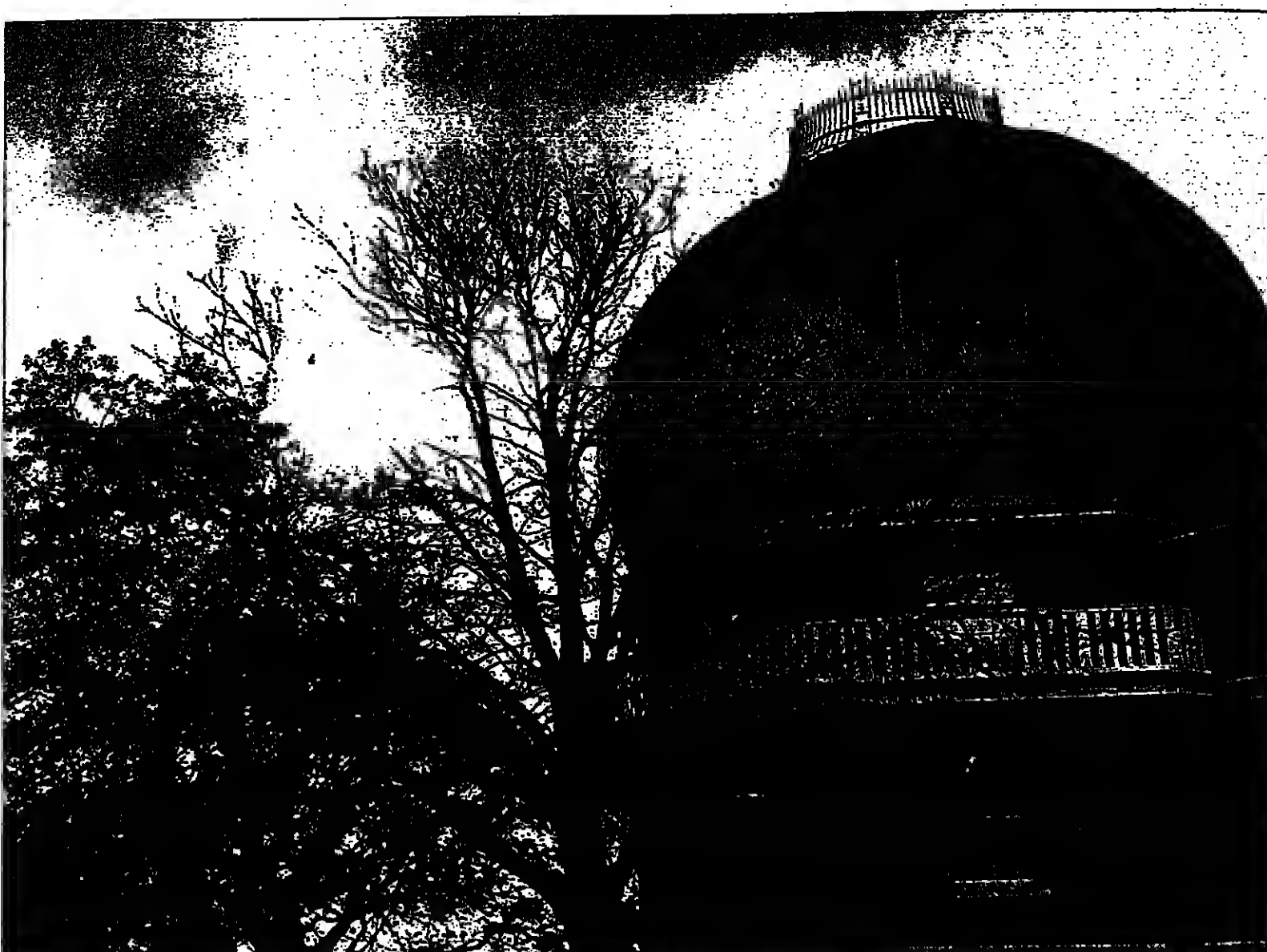
The National Maritime Museum hopes to raise £8m from exploiting the millennium. It needs the money to top up £12m it has received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards a £20m redevelopment of museum buildings.

Already signed up as long-term partners for the millennium are Mumm Champagne, which has bought the position of "Official Champagne" of the millennium, and Accurist, which, as official timekeeper for Greenwich, is supplying a 1,000-day countdown clock.

Television personality Carol Vorderman and the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Roger Cook, were at a private New Year's Eve-style party at the observatory last night for the official unveiling of the Greenwich Millennium Countdown Clock.

A deal has even been signed for a millennium wine from a Bordeaux vineyard that lies on the zero meridian. A commemorative coin has also been planned.

Greenwich has sold the television rights to a 24-hour telethon on New Year's Eve 1999 at the meridian to usher in the millennium.



Sunset over the Old Royal Observatory. Plans are afoot at Greenwich to take commercial advantage of the millennium. Photograph: Geraint Lewis

Businesses drool over thousands to be made

Colin Blackstock and
Nicole Yeash

British companies are planning to sell everything from cars to deodorants, flowers to exotic holidays by cashing in on the millennium and what they hope will be a frenzy of consumers looking to buy a slice of history. Most "millennium" goods are being placed behind closed doors and will not be launched until nearer the date, but some needed very long-term planning.

Bushmills Distillery, leading Irish whiskey makers, began making their millennium tipple in 1975.

Wealthy whiskey-lovers from across the world, including *Star Trek* actor LeVar Burton and Inspector Morse star John Thaw, have lined up to buy the single malt.

A spokesman said: "We have made 360 barrels and started selling them nearly three years ago. There was a real rush to buy them."

"The last one sold about a year ago. But they are a bit special, because each bottle comes with the buyer's name on the label."

A more blatant exploitation is planned by manufacturers who can simply re-brand their products with a "millennium" name.

Trevor Elliott, manager of Honda Motor Sports, said: "I think most car manufacturers will be planning to launch special editions of their existing ranges, but everyone is keeping quiet at the moment."

"It will probably be a marketing-led initiative, rather than the creation of new products. But most companies will want to do some kind of tie-in."

The range of millennium goods already on offer is eclectic. The Royal National Rose Society has a millennium range of roses in the horticulture market; there is a special scent from bodyspray makers Impulse and even a new millennium range of luggage from Antler.

Avon Cosmetics have already nabbed one of the scarce millennium patents with their Millennium perfume for women, which is said to "fuse past, present and future into an intoxicating blend of mystical spices".

Christian Brown, a spokesman for the company,

Timely gifts



said: "It is already our third-best-selling fragrance and we are planning to launch Millennium aftershave for men soon."

The Patent Office is now being inundated with companies rushing to register millennium trademarks.

Geoff Sargent, assistant director of marketing, said: "If companies are blatantly seeking to simply cash in on the event or day itself and use the term in a way that prevents someone else from doing so, they are unlikely to get the trademark."

British Airways are also laying plans for a high-flying celebration on Concorde. A spokesman said: "Nothing has been finalised yet, but we've had lots of inquiries from people who want to charter Concorde to New York and fly through three datelines. But we really want to do something which will benefit a lot of people."

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British Psychological Society

Maths, love and man's best friend

Choosing a partner is like finding a job

Reports by Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

Your eyes meet across a crowded room and suddenly you know there is no one else for you. You have never felt this way before.

The glorious irrationality of the emotion called love? Not at all, according to new research. Your choice of lover has subconsciously been made coolly and rationally, based on a mathematical model – similar to how job applications are processed – which analyses the best mate you're likely to get.

But finding the love of your life through mathematics does not have to be a long, protracted process. Dr. Peter Todd, of the Max Planck Institute in Munich, said that by the time someone had met 12 potential partners they had enough information to make a good choice as to who should be their life-long love.

By the time you had analysed the dozen you were attracted to, Dr. Todd told the British Psychological Society's Annual Conference, you had formed the criteria of what you were looking for in a life partner and would then take the next best one that came along.

To consider more could mean you ended up with the law of di-

minishing returns. "This is so-lace for people who believe you don't have to spend your whole life searching for the right person," he said.

For true perfectionists he added that the 37 per cent rule which was currently used to evaluate job applications could be employed.

It is estimated that once an employer has seen 37 per cent of job applicants a coherent picture of the ideal employee is built up and the next person to fulfil these criteria is the one that gets the job.

When it came to affairs of the heart, Dr. Todd said that you should first estimate how many people you were likely to meet in life, assess the first 37 per cent, remember who was best, and then take the next person who measured up. Unfortunately, you would probably have to search through 75 per cent of potential acquaintances to do so. And for most of us who meet thousands of people, it is likely to be an impossible task.

However, Dr. Todd said there was no point in going to the other extreme and marrying your childhood sweetheart, because at the time you met, you would probably not have assessed enough potential spouses to make a logical choice.



Biting the hand: Psychologists say pets could have more sinister, Darwinian motives than just love and a stroke

Photograph: Edward Sykes

Pets may be after more than affection

Your tabby cat may seem to be your best friend when she responds to a gentle pat with what seems like unconditional love and devotion.

But beware: your pet may be manipulating you into treating it like a favoured child, at the potential expense of your own offspring.

In Darwinian terms, this is highly beneficial for Rover, but not such good news for the evolution of the human race, the British Psychological Society annual conference heard yesterday.

"Pet-keeping is best viewed as a form of social parasitism where one species manipulates the behaviour of the other to obtain a benefit," according to Professor John Archer of the University of Central Lancashire.

Cats and dogs can become "cuckoos in the nest" by diverting attention away from human friends, he said. They can even make it difficult for you to form relationships.

"In evolutionary terms, pet ownership is a puzzling form of behaviour since it entails provisioning another species in return for which there are no apparent benefits."

He put forward an alternative Darwinian explanation in which pets con humans with responses that have traditionally assisted human relationships.

King Charles spaniels and Chihuahuas, for instance, are particularly attractive to us because we associate their features – big eyes and chubby cheeks – with babies.

"We are able to feel in part that we are responding in the way we would respond to babies," said Professor Archer.

Owners also talk to their pets in baby talk normally reserved for young children.

Coupled with that, pets show affection in a non-judgmental way which we find attractive.

All the smart people love cereal

Tucking into a bowl of cornflakes washed down with orange juice and coffee will boost your IQ and put you in a better mood, new research has found.

Breakfast-eaters performed up to 10 per cent better in memory tests, in recording lists of words and in the ability to think logically, the British Psychological Society's annual conference heard yesterday.

In another study looking at the long-term effects of eating breakfast, cereals emerged as the optimum food. Andrew Smith, Professor of Psychology at Bristol University, told the conference in Edinburgh: "People feel better – cereals boost their mood."

In the study, nearly 50 people

had their mental functions and mood measured before eating. Half were then given breakfast and half subsisted on a cup of decaffeinated coffee. In subsequent tests, the breakfast-eaters proved 10 per cent better at mental tasks. The key factor, said the professor, could be the glucose from the food which remedied low blood sugar levels.

To test the long-term improvement from regular breakfast eating, Professor Smith surveyed 600 people. Those who did not bother with the first meal of the day had the most negative effects – such as the most gloomy mood – with cereal eaters being the happiest.

Of the elderly people tested,



those who eat cereal regularly had a sunnier outlook and the highest intelligence scores, although the professor warned

that this could simply mean that more-intelligent people tended to eat breakfast. In another study, Professor Smith said that those who had a high intake of caffeine performed most efficiently throughout the day. Workers who imbibed 200 milligrams of caffeine or more – four cups of coffee or five cups of tea – had the highest level of efficiency at the end of the day.

Suicide notes may be key to saving others

Notes left by suicides could hold the key to stop other people taking their own lives, leading psychologists were told yesterday.

By identifying common features in the letters, it would be possible to draw up a list of symptoms to help identify potential suicides.

Rory O'Connor of Queen's University, Belfast, told the British Psychological Society annual conference in Edinburgh: "The suicide notes are the closest you will get to the state of the person prior to their death."

He analysed 45 notes left by people who killed themselves in Northern Ireland in 1993-94. Mr O'Connor was given special permission to look at the notes – which are usually kept confidential – for the study.

They varied considerably. Some people left just a few lines, while others wrote pages and pages to several people.

But in all of them, they indicated a sense of hopelessness and "an unbearable psychological pain".

Those who were clinically depressed – 29 out of the total – also felt out of control, were unable to look beyond their problems and acted illogically.

They felt let down because of failed relationships and thought life was not worth living.

People showing symptoms like these should be regarded as a suicide risk, he said, adding: "Having this list means that if a depressed person comes to me as a GP, then I will know what to look for."

He admitted, however, that it was more difficult to help someone who was not actually depressed although they went on to commit suicide.

Such people did not feel that their lives were out of control and were less likely to seek help for their condition, such as going to their doctor.

However, Mr O'Connor said it was still possible to help those people most likely to take their own lives – people who were depressed.

You cannot eliminate the problem, but you can reduce the suicide rate," he said.

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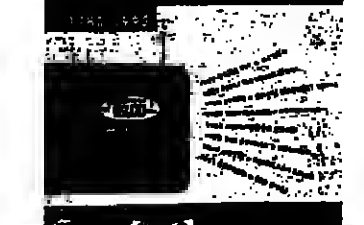
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news

Rights of passage still closed

Simon Reeve

Ramblers from across Britain demonstrated near a beauty spot in Leicestershire yesterday as part of their campaign for new access laws to restore walkers' right to roam.

Members of the 119,000-strong Ramblers Association protested next to High Sharpley a hill in north-west Leicestershire, and called on the next government to change the law regarding the right to roam across uncultivated countryside.

The owner of High Sharpley erected barbed wire around the hill, allegedly to discourage rambling, and locals reminisced yesterday about how they were allowed to walk on the land until the 1960s, when the current restrictions were introduced.

According to Kate Ashbrook, chairman of the association, High Sharpley is "typical" of hundreds of pieces of countryside that could be opened up to walkers.

"Our proposed new law, giving the right to roam over mountain, moor, heath and woodland, would restore people's lost freedom," she said.



Access barred: Ramblers' Association chairman Kate Ashbrook encounters obstacles near Loughborough

Photograph: Paul Rogers

'Sickness and spasms ... then cannabis changed my life'



This advert will argue that an illegal drug is actually good for some people

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

A major advertising campaign to have cannabis legalised for medical use is being launched to coincide with a British Medical Association report, due in the summer, that is likely to recommend trials of the drug for multiple sclerosis sufferers.

Press advertisements, have been produced by a group of volunteers from the advertising industry and a number of magazines have pledged free advertising space for them to run.

The campaign is hoped that the advertisement will appear in magazines read by "opinion formers", such as the *New Statesman* and *Spectator*. An appeal has also gone out to national newspapers to provide free space.

sudden loss of balance ... and then cannabis changed my life." The advertisements also ask why heroin is legal in prescribed form but not cannabis.

Dr Roger Pertwee, of the University of Aberdeen who has contributed to the BMA report, is planning a clinical trial into the effect of Nabillon on MS sufferers. He believes that legalisation for medicinal purposes should be allowed even without comprehensive clinical evidence.

"In an ideal world you would wait for clinical trials, but patients are already self-medicating. They are risking their health with non-medical supplies of cannabis as well as arrest. It would be much better for them to take their cannabis under medical supervision."

Patients are risking their health with non-medical supplies of cannabis

vision," he said. The ACT was founded by Clare Hodges, a Leeds mother-of-two who suffers from MS. It received a flip-flop last November when voters in California and Arizona approved ballot proposals that cannabis be legalised for medical treatment.

In the United States the issue has been driven by Aids pressure groups, such as the Cannabis Cultivators' Club in San Francisco. Cannabis has helped Aids patients recover their appetite and reverse weight-loss caused by the condition.

However, the ACT emphasises that it is campaigning for cannabis to be prescribed only medically by doctors. In California, prescriptions supplied by doctors allow the Cannabis Cultivators' Club to sell it to be smoked or put in spaghetti sauce.

There are six advertisements, including the slogan: "Muscle, spasms, continual sickness, uncontrollable bedwetting, and

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ZANUSSI WASH 500

1000 spin/100 wash load

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LEO WASH 500

1000 spin/100 wash load

normally £289.99 ... **SAVE \$100** ... **\$189.99**

WASHING MACHINES

INDIST WASH 500

1000 spin/100 wash load

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TRICITY BENDON CASH

12 programmes combinations

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1200 spin/110 wash load

18 programmes

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HOTPOINT WASH 500

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THE INDEPENDENT election '97

Blair's devolution plans lose something in the translation

Tony Blair may have been schooled in Edinburgh, but he is as thoroughly English as any Westminster figure. When it comes to Scottish politics, he doesn't speak the language.

By insisting yesterday that sovereignty belongs solely to Westminster and comparing the tax-raising powers of his proposed Scottish parliament to an English parish council, Blair depressed many Scots. Wittingly or not, he slapped down a

whole tradition of leftist Scottish politics, embraced by his own party and friends.

It holds that, in a modern state, sovereignty belongs to the people themselves; and that a Scottish parliament is an expression of national identity.

Nine years ago, John Smith, the former Labour leader, Donald Dewar, Blair's chief whip and George Robertson, the shadow Scottish Secretary, were among the 58 Scottish Labour

and Liberal Democrat MPs who signed the "Claim of Right" which declared "the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs." Compare Blair's assertion that "we are not devolving sovereignty... that local services that Scotland is running, Scotland can make the laws for".

These may seem intriguing but tiny points. They are not. By confirming the old Westminster



ANDREW MARR

is-absolute theory of British government, Blair hints that he will be as centralist in Downing Street as he has been as Labour

leader. He implies that the Scottish parliament is a loaned, local affair, not to be taken too seriously, despite the self-conscious pomp of the Scottish Constitutional Convention.

There is a more general point. This was not the tone of a natural reformer or decentralist: English reformers, as well as Scottish home-rulers, will be a little queasy.

Yet there is another, more favourable explanation. It is sim-

ply that, when discussing Scottish home rule, Blair thinks far more carefully and seriously about his English audience than his Scottish one. This is a natural and sensible thing for him to do. He is defending himself against the most dangerous attack, which comes from the south, and is hostile to devolution.

And if he is the man who actually delivers what has been talked about and promised by centre-left politicians since the

early years of this century, why would anyone quibble over the election-campaign semantics? So most of Labour's Scottish supporters will bite their tongues, and bide their time.

In the longer term, though, this sort of Westminster Unionism is just the language to help the rising Scottish Nationalists and drive some of the already-disaffected Scottish Labourites into their ranks. The big danger to Home Rule was always

a tactical alliance between Tory Unionists and the socialist SNP against what is, in reality, the moderate position taken by Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish churches.

So though Blair has made his first election blunder we should not rush to judgement. In delivering devolution, he has a horribly difficult and intricate job ahead of him: the continuation of Britain probably depends on him pulling it off.

SNP accuses Blair of Scottish sell-out

Stephen Goodwin

Scottish Nationalists seized on Tony Blair's assertion of English sovereignty over a Scottish Parliament as proof positive of a Labour retreat on devolution.

Mr Blair had "hurled" the hopes of hundreds of thousands of people who believed Labour would deliver change, the SNP leader Alex Salmond said with evident relish as Mr Blair's snub to the Edinburgh parliament and block on its tax powers ignited the election campaign in Scotland.

For the SNP, struggling to make the nationalist voice heard above the two-party struggle, and the Scottish Tories, brought low by resignations and in-fighting, Mr Blair's remarks were manna from heaven.

But for Liberal Democrats who took part with Labour in the Scottish Constitutional Convention to draw up plans for a Scottish parliament, it was a more awkward moment.

Jim Wallace, leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats, said Mr Blair's words "betrayed" his lack of any "gut conviction" that there should be a parliament in Edinburgh.

He believed Labour was committed to a parliament, but the best guarantee that one would be delivered was to vote in a strong contingent of Lib-Dem MPs.

Launching the party's Scottish manifesto, Mr Wallace was sharply critical of Mr Blair's neutering of the proposed power to vary tax rates in Scotland by up to 3p in the pound. The pledge not to raise basic or standard rate of income tax for five

years applied to Scotland as well as England, Mr Blair had said.

But Mr Wallace said the Scottish people had a right to decide through the ballot box whether they wanted the parliament to vary taxes.

"The tax powers of a Scottish parliament are every bit as much an issue of democracy as they are of taxation," he said. "Mr Blair is showing more interest in middle-England voters than in Scottish democracy."

While Mr Blair maintained the self-denying ordinance had "shot the Tory fox on tax", Mr Wallace suggested a Scottish Parliament might want to go it alone on the Liberal Democrat proposal for an extra 1p in the pound on tax to pay for education improvements.

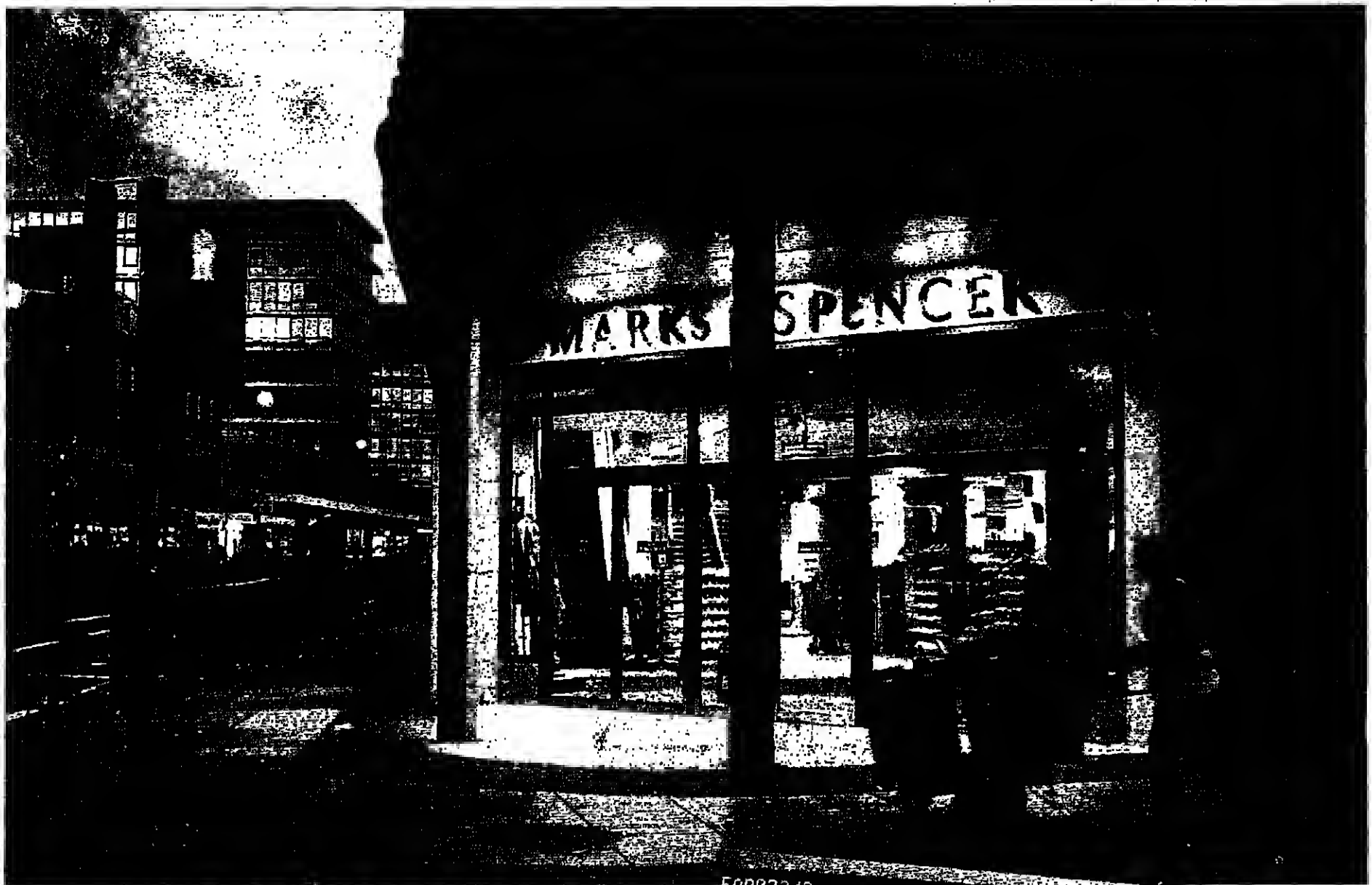
Michael Forsyth, Secretary of State for Scotland, said Mr Blair had made a "laughing stock" of Liberal Democrats who were already spending the tartan tax, and had cast asrift his supporters in Scotland.

"The Scottish Constitutional Convention worked for six years and in six minutes Tony Blair has shredded its proposals. The whole devolution fiasco is a mess of contradictions and deceptions," Mr Forsyth said.

Mr Salmond said the Labour leader had shown his "contempt and derision" for the Scottish people.

"New Labour's devolution policy is now exposed by Blair for what it always has been - a decoy which would return to Edinburgh less power than an English parish council has, and leave all the decision-making then - as now - with English MPs."

M&S doorway becomes an official residence



Homeless duo exercise their right to join council's electoral register

Ben Summers

"The Doorway, Marks & Spencer, Rampant Horse Street, Norwich." Paul Ashwell's city address is not one of the most prestigious in the country. But it has been recorded as his official residence in the electoral register so that he can vote in the general election.

Once a homeless person has picked up a form, "the procedure is exactly the same for you and I. So long as they put an address where they say they reside, it will be processed in exactly the same way as any other form," he said.

Homelessness has become a big issue in the United Kingdom over the past 20 years, but only

recently has the electoral system begun to acknowledge homeless people as a feature of the electoral landscape.

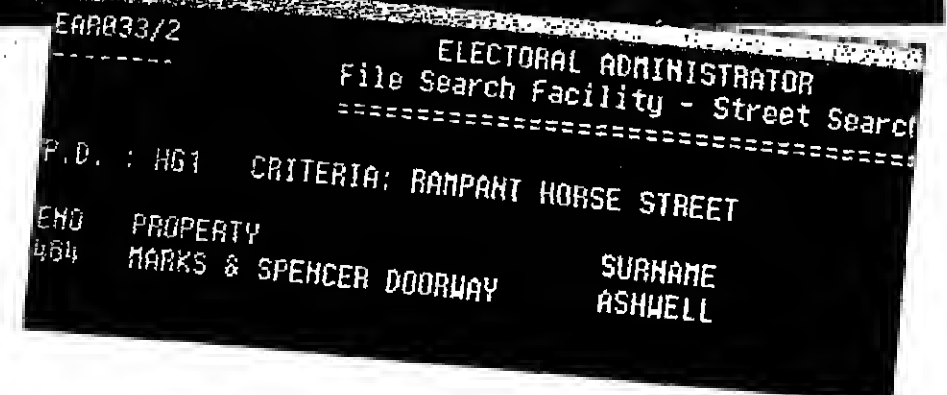
A Home Office working party reported in 1995 that the "absence of bricks and mortar" should not disqualify an address from being registered.

In 1996, a further precedent was set when a homeless man in Cornwall took Penwith District Council to court after it refused to accept a local day centre as his address, effectively denying him a place on the electoral register. Judge Anthony Thompson QC reversed the council's decision, saying: "It cannot be right that simply because a person is homeless he

is deprived of the right to vote."

Manchester City Council established a scheme to encourage rough sleepers to register in 1995, but few signed up. Many said that gaining a vote was low on their priority list. Others

feared the consequences of registering their name and location together with their homeless status. But in Norwich, the council hopes that its "no-homes-for-votes" scheme will benefit from the publicity attracted by the general election. "I guess that for next year's council elections, we might have considerably more people registering," said Mr Turner. "It's a question of small beginnings."



Des Res: The Marks & Spencer doorway (top), which is registered as Paul Ashwell's residence for voting purposes. Above: The details recorded on computer. Photographs: Simon Hadley

Battle hots up over tax plans

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats were reduced to a form of political mud-wrestling over their respective tax plans yesterday.

The day's accusations began with the Conservatives, whose press conference slogan of the day was: "Tory tax cuts in April. Labour tax rises in July."

But while Mr Major accused Labour of harbouring secret tax plans, there was again no answer to the question - for the fourth day running - as to whether another Conservative government

would further extend or increase VAT.

Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, preferred to concentrate his attack on Labour's so-called black hole - the gap between its spending commitments and its funding, partly exposed by the money that might have been raised from privatisation projects in the second year of a Labour government.

That second-year gap currently runs to £1.5bn, but Alistair Darling, Labour's Treasury spokesman, promptly retaliated, asking the Chancellor: "Which revenue-raising pri-

oritisation has he committed himself to, apart from air traffic control, to raise £1.5bn in the second year of government?"

Mr Clarke said he had "a pretty good idea" what other privatisations could be launched to raise the rest of the missing £1.5bn, but he was not going to identify them.

Attention then switched to the Liberal Democrat manifesto, which included a paragraph, saying: "We will take nearly 500,000 low-earners out of income tax altogether by raising tax thresholds. This will provide lower taxes and new incentives to work, while cutting

the benefits bill and reducing tax for 99.5 per cent of all income taxpayers."

Challenged by *The Independent* about that statement when the party was pledged to increase the rate by a penny, to 24p in the pound, Paddy Ashdown suggested that all taxpayers would benefit from the lifting of the tax threshold by £200 - before they paid the extra penny.

The calculations were complex, but he later told the BBC radio's *World at One* programme: "The average taxpayer is paying more tax."

Under the Liberal Democrat plans, 140,000 people with tax-

able income of more than £100,000 would pay a top tax rate of 50p, raising £1.4bn. Of that, £1.2bn would be used to lift the tax threshold by £200, taking 470,000 people out of tax completely. Of the remaining 25 million taxpayers, the estimated 12.5 million earning up to about £12,945 would be better off, or no worse off, and the other 12.5 million would make a contribution towards extra finance for education.

Mr Ashdown said those on average earnings of £19,000 would pay an extra £1.23 a week, while those on £38,000 would pay an extra £2.70.

Voters' minds clouded by deep-rooted suspicion

Michael Streeter

A cautious reaction to a cautious manifesto. Tony Blair's "covenant" with the people earned a mixed reception in Mondeo Land yesterday, the swathe of country across the central regions of England, where new Labour has to pick up one-time Thatcherite voters to win the election.

His plea for "honest politics" struck a chord with some of *The Independent's* group of disaffected Tory voters in Redditch and the modest Labour manifesto seemed to catch the mood better than the Tories' last-minute clutch of new policies. For these voters, the tedium is the message. But there was still deep scepticism about the Labour pledge not to raise headline tax rates and doubts that Mr Blair's vision of honest politics could survive under the pressures of office.

Paramedic Lionel Baird, 52, who is likely to switch to new Labour, found the manifesto's caution "refreshing". He said: "It's better to have some honesty rather than politicians letting things go by the board when



in power, saying 'that's not quite what we meant.' However, he had reservations about how even the modest proposals could be financed.

Engineer Mark Redfern, 29, another likely switcher, saw the tone of the Labour document as a welcome change, applauding its emphasis on education: "The most important thing for us is getting our two children a decent education." He found Mr Blair trustworthy, but added: "You have to be wary of all politicians."

For former British gas manager Roger Frost, the main virtue was the lack of bold promises. "I think [politicians] have got a lot of bridges to build with the public. A lot of people I speak to say they wouldn't buy a second-hand car from a politician."

But for Susan Lovett, 38, a sales consultant now looking after her two young children at home, the manifesto's "vagueness" was ominous. "Mr Blair

has left out more than he has put in. Where is the money going to come from?"

Supermarket worker Denise Sparkes, 35, also queried how Labour would fund its proposals and found "no great vision" to attract her.

Steven Marriott, 28, a radio engineer, is still undecided after the two main manifestos and believes both Tony Blair and John Major are avoiding hard truths, neatly reflecting the views of Paddy Ashdown's at yesterday's Liberal Democrat manifesto launch. "They are going to have to put up taxes to do what they say, and they are being dishonest with us about that," said Mr Marriott.

He was unsure whether to trust Mr Blair, adding: "You don't know what they're like until they get in power."

The likely impact of power on Mr Blair also concerned tool-maker Andrew Osciak, 45, who said: "They all change, don't they?" But he thought the Labour leader had shown himself "tougher and more convincing" than Mr Major and liked Mr Blair's emphasis on jobs and education.

US author hot on Labour trail

Steve Boggan

If Tony Blair thought it was bad being shadowed on his campaign bus by dozens of British journalists, he will not have been cheered up by the arrival of the *New Yorker's* correspondent, Joe Klein.

Mr Klein, aged 50, became known as the *bête noire* of American politicians after he was unmasked as the anonymous

author of the best-selling novel, *Primary Colors*.

In that novel, the author, "Anonymous" wrote with alarming detail about the election campaign of Jack Stanton - a thinly-disguised Bill Clinton - and the antics of his staff.

The book, which has so far netted Mr Klein royalties estimated at \$6m (about £4m) caused a furore in Washington, leading to Mr Klein's eventual

unmasking. He had been on the real 1992 campaign trail with Mr Clinton for *Newsweek* magazine.

He arrived on Mr Blair's campaign trail two days ago to write a 10,000-word comparison of the British and American campaign styles - but he will, like British journalists, not be allowed anything like the kind of access American journalists enjoyed with Mr Clinton.

Asked whether he was planning to write a novel on the British campaign, he said no. But he had already been amused by the arrival on Thursday of the Tory chicken.

"You should have seen our campaign in Missouri in 1988," he said. "A whole barnyard manager turned up to confront [Michael] Dukakis because the Republicans put it out that he was in favour of repealing the laws against sodomy..."



Joe Klein: Book caused stir

election '97

Major on offensive at the Albert Hall



True blue: Tory faithful queuing for the flag-waving extravaganza held yesterday at the Albert Hall in Kensington, London

Photograph: Tom Pileton

Colin Brown sees a spectacle to match the Proms Last Night

More Union flags than the Last Night of the Proms were waved at the Royal Albert Hall last night for a Conservative morale-boosting rally by John Major.

Mr Major's speech, attacking Labour for the "arrogance of socialism", was delayed by the bomb alerts at some London mainline railway stations.

Brian Mawhinney, the chairman of the Conservative Party, told the revellers: "A lot of people are planning to be here tonight, but out of courtesy to them, you would not mind a delay."

The Prime Minister re-drafted his speech to go on the offensive against Tony Blair over Labour's disarray on Scottish devolution on the Prime Minister's trip back from Southampton, where he was out campaigning in the Tory marginals.

He accused Mr Blair of "hypocrisy" for saying one thing and doing another, over the choice of the Oratory for his children, although Labour was opposed to an expansion of "opt-out" schools, which is pro-

posed in the Tory election manifesto.

That message went down well on the campaign trail, and got the loudest cheer earlier in the week when Mr Major jostled with the hecklers in Carlisle market square from a new high-tech "soap box" attached to his battle bus.

It was enough to send the party faithful into the kind of ecstatic applause normally reserved at the Albert Hall for the last strains of "Land of Hope and Glory" in the finale of the Proms.

Mr Blair's name was greeted with shouts of "chicken" by rowdy young Tory supporters.

The party had bused in more than 2,000 supporters for one of the biggest political rallies in Britain since the ill-fated Labour rally in Sheffield, when Labour, under Neil Kinnock, lost the 1992 election.

The spectacle of jingoistic celebration risked having the same effect as the Sheffield rally on Labour's chances.

Only a few hours before, Mr Major had warned Labour that it's policy on Scotland would risk raising nationalism in England. But the Conservative rally was a celebration of British nationalism.

One woman fan of John Major sported a knitted doll of the Prime Minister in shades of grey wool, with a garland of union flags in her hair.

But Mohammad Khalid, owner of the Kohinoor restaurant in Ilford, said the flags were "beautiful". He promised the local Tory MP, Sir Neil Thorne,

they would have a celebration with world-class Indian musicians at the Albert Hall when they won.

A 17-year-old student, Jonjo MacNamara, from Richmond, Yorkshire, said: "We are the party of the Union. The Union Jack is as much a part of the Conservative Party as it is everyone in Britain. We love our country and we love our party."

Lord Archer, the novelist, who acted as the warm-up act for the Prime Minister, said: "If we have a weakness, it is not our inability to achieve - it's our inability to let the people know what we have achieved."

Tories pin their hopes on undecided

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major last night said he's counting on the "don't knows" to rescue the Tories from defeat on polling day.

The Prime Minister went angling for the floating voter at a 300-year-old pub on the River Hamble, Southampton, and claimed the don't knows were the same birth-Conservatives who would "come home" on 1 May.

"I think the don't knows are beginning to harden up," said Mr Major. "There are an awful lot of people out there who have not committed themselves."

yachting haven at Hamble, in the Eastleigh constituency the Tories lost in a by-election to the Liberal Democrats, and met local anglers worried about Labour's ban on cruel sports.

There was abundant evidence wherever he went of the don't knows. At Southampton Airport Ruth Quigley, 49, said she and her 81-year-old mother, who shares the same birthday as Mr Major, were undecided even though her mother had been a confirmed Major fan since he had sent her a birthday card from Downing Street.

"I have so many friends saying the same thing," she said. "Even my mother who is an ardent John Major fan is undecided."

The reasons include insecurity about unemployment. "When you go in the job shop, you are treated like a national insurance number. I would like to be given personalised appointments. People like me are not too old at 49 but we don't want to be stuck on government training courses with 19-year-old kids."

Another don't know, Alex Brandon, 33, is opening a job recruitment agency through the Internet. She told Mr Major he could make use of Recruitment Revolution, based in Bournemouth, if he was out of a job on 1 May. He replied: "I won't be needing that madam."

However, if the don't knows fail to come to his rescue, Ms Brandon said he would be unemployed for long. "He would make a good recruitment consultant," she said.

... while Blair revels in Victoria Hall ovation

Steve Boggan attended a Labour rally aimed at wooing Tory waverers

While thousands of flag-waving Tories were enjoying a rousing bano at the Royal Albert Hall in London (capacity 5,500), Tony Blair was at the Victoria Hall in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire (capacity 400), taking his message to the front line.

It was billed as Tony versus the Tory waverers, an opportunity to upstage John Major by showing that small is beautiful, but it was slightly spoiled by the fact that hardly any Conservatives showed up.

Instead, hundreds of die-hard Labour supporters arrived and gave him a standing ovation before he spoke his first words - which, rather embarrassingly, were: "We deliberately draw a contrast with the Conservatives in the Albert Hall in London. They are preaching to the converted. I am here persuading those who have not been converted."

Nevertheless, it was a worthwhile exercise in a constituency - Staffordshire Moorlands - which is held by the Tories, but which should swing to Labour simply because of boundary changes. And it gave Labour the opportunity to liken the Tory rallies - and their inherent emphasis on patriotism - to their own dispirited triumphalism in Sheffield at the last election.

"I am a patriot," said Mr Blair. "I love Britain and am proud to be British. And I will tell you what being a patriot means to me. Patriotism is not just about muzzling words, or waving the flag. It is about what is in your heart."



Preaching to the converted: Tony Blair addressing yesterday's rally of mainly Labour supporters in Kidsgrove Photograph: Martin Rickett/Newstream

"It is about the nature of the society you want to build. It is about knowing that for a nation to be strong, society must be strong. That there is such a thing as society. That there must be a place within it for the weak as well as the strong. A Britain for the many, not the few."

Afterwards, aides said they had tried to attract more wavering Tories by placing advertisements in the local paper. "We wanted to show that while the Tories are going in for seven of these huge rallies, which seem to be aimed

at boosting party morale, Tony wants to get out there meeting people and asking for their votes," said one aide. "A couple of weeks ago, the Conservatives said Mr Major was going to get on his soap box and talk to the people. Now they're presenting him as a big presidential-style candidate. We wouldn't be so arrogant. We don't take anyone's vote for granted."

So, were the few Conservatives who did attend turned on to Labour? June Ross, a 59-year-old retired schoolteacher from Stoke-on-Trent, was before the meeting. She said she had been turned off the Tories by sleaze. "They only want to line their own pockets," she said. After the meeting, she said: "I will vote for him. He is

a very personable man and I was impressed by his sincerity and the fact that he won't make promises he can't deliver..."

But Jack Hartley, 64, a retired civil servant, was not so easily won over. "I'm still undecided," he said. "He seems very articulate, but he came across as a bit of a political Del Boy. That's not unusual, mind - that's how I think of all politicians."

Labour target seats may buck national trend

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour will have an uphill battle to win its target seats because they may be more Tory-leaning than other areas, an analysis by a leading merchant bank has concluded.

A report for clients of SBC Warburg concluded that Labour would win the election with a majority of between 19 and 30 seats, just enough to prevent the City from becoming nervous that the new government might not stay the course.

Stephen Yorke, the bank's head of political research, said that at the last election many of the seats Labour needs to win went against the national trend. The Tories could unexpectedly hang on to some of their marginals, he concluded.

Mr Yorke's report told the bank's clients not to over-invest in sterling in the next few weeks in case a hung parliament makes the markets jittery.

He said demographic trends can buck the polls, as they did in London at the last election, when votes swung away from Labour towards the Conservatives in some key seats.

Local radio and television coupled with increasingly sophisticated campaign techniques had made people more aware of their MPs and more likely to support them, he said.

Mr Yorke also said the long campaign and a general trend towards lower turn-outs might act against Labour, which tended to do best when turn-outs are high. He added that voters could, and did, change their minds at the last moment.

As the dreaded voting moment arrives, fear becomes a more powerful emotion than hope. If one examines the post-1979 political landscape, the UK is a two-election culture: general elections and everything else," his report said.

The report compared this election with that of 1964, when a dynamic young Labour leader, Harold Wilson, campaigned on the theme of "Time for a change" after 13 years of Tory rule. The Tory party was mired in scandal, having been hit hard by the Profumo affair, and its leader, Alec Douglas-Home, was seen as weak and ineffective.

During the campaign, he said, the Conservatives successfully frightened the electorate about the risks of change and Wilson won by only five votes.

THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

THE CAMPAIGN

The event of the day was the launch of the Liberal Democrats' manifesto, though it was overshadowed by arguments about Labour's plans for Scotland and on tax.

The Liberal Democrats renewed their promise of £2bn per year for education, to be raised by putting a penny on the basic rate of income tax, and £200m a year for the health service by putting an extra five pence on the price of a packet of cigarettes.

They also promised to recruit more doctors and nurses, cut hospital waiting lists and restore free dental and eye checks. On the environment, the party would increase taxes on pollution but would cut tax to £10 on cars under 1600cc. Every government policy would have an environmental objective built in. On crime, the Liberal Democrats plan to put 3,000 more police officers on the beat.

While the Conservatives again concentrated on attacking Labour, Tony Blair was launching his party's Scottish manifesto. Its central plank was the party's plan for devolution, and the promise of a referendum on the subject "as quickly as possible" after polling day. The Labour leader also promised that a unified tax on privatised utilities would help 25,000 young Scots off benefit and into work.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Blair came under fire after an interview in the Scotsman in which he compared the powers of a Scottish parliament to those of a parish council.

He told the paper: "The powers are like those of any local authority. Powers that are constitutionally there can be used, but the Scottish Labour Party has no plans to raise income tax, and once the power is given it is like any parish council, it's got the right to exercise it."

Major described Blair's remarks as "patronising and extraordinarily inaccurate," while the Scottish National Party leader, Alex Salmond, said Blair had exposed the weakness of his devolution plans. "What he has done is to confirm that England rules OK under devolution." Pressed on whether Westminster would be able to veto a Scottish parliament's tax-raising powers, Blair did not answer.

Major also turned his fire on Labour's tax plans, saying that Conservative tax cuts coming into force this week would be reversed by July if the party won power.

Meanwhile, Paddy Ashdown launched the Liberal manifesto, calling for an end to fatalism in British politics and a new belief that things could change.

GOOD DAY

Education and Employment Secretary Gillian Shephard was able to play the role of a policymaker standing firm against rowdy trade unionists at the NASUWT conference in Bournemouth. To boost his sales, she told the teachers that there was "never any excuse for a professional person to strike."

She caused more anger by outlining a history of Tory "fair trade union legislation," and later described the whole event as "rather jolly."

BAD DAY

Tony Blair yesterday seemed to compare the powers of a Scottish parliament to those of a parish council. Nor would he say if he would overrule an Edinburgh parliament which wanted to put up income tax. This was a reminder of an earlier Scotsman interview when he appeared not to know about the Claim of Right signed by Scots Labour MPs asserting their nation's right to decide how it will be governed itself.

HOGWASH

The millennium is mentioned all the main parties' manifestos, and its occurrence always marks a passage of pseudo-inspirational hogwash. "Every vote and every seat we win will ensure that in the next Parliament Britain can at last face up to the challenge, as we enter the next millennium". A classic example from Paddy Ashdown, set out in the Liberal Democrat manifesto yesterday.

THE OTHER PARTIES

The Monster Raving Loony Party announced that they are likely to field more than the magic 50 candidates - entitling them to a party political broadcast. Just as the Natural Law Party shot to fame in the 1992 general election campaign with their broadcast about the possibilities for 'Yogic

Flying' and transcendental meditation, the Monster Raving Loony party will be using their air-time to push their radical policies. According to party chairman Alan Hope, their plans include proposals to move the best mountain in the South Sandwich Islands and a commitment to turn butter mountains into ski slopes.

MEDIA STAR

The media spotlight was turned on beards yesterday, when a flustered Tony Blair struggled at his morning press conference to justify his comments about devolution in the Scotsman. Unable to remember the names of the journalists questioning him, he referred to them as "the beard on the left" and "the beard on the right." The Labour leader may wish he had shown the bearded community a little more respect. If he wins on May 1st, he is committed to appointing three bearded men (Frank Dobson, Robin Cook and David Blunkett) to the Cabinet, the first since Sidney Webb in 1930.

ONE TO REMEMBER

Richard Branson told Railway Magazine that he thought Labour was "secretly relieved" about railway privatisation. Branson, who now runs two train companies, said that Labour would not have sold off the railways themselves. "I believe that secretly, they are quite relieved it's happened," he said. "I therefore don't think they'll do much to rock the boat." He added that a Labour election victory was "not something that worries me too much."

Manifesto details: Big idea is to fund £2bn education programme with 1p rise in basic income tax

Lib-Dems focus on improving schools

The Liberal Democrats' big idea is to pump £2bn per year into the education service, funded by a penny on the basic rate of income tax. The following is an edited version of their manifesto.

Education

Extra money raised for education would be spent on doubling the amount of cash available for books and equipment within a year, reducing primary school class sizes to less than 30, investing £500m in buildings' maintenance over five years and giving adults more chances to learn.

The Liberal Democrats also promise high-quality early-years' education for all three and four-year-olds whose parents want it, and the scrapping of the Tories' nursery voucher scheme.

The party wants to set up a General Teaching Council, strengthen the school inspection system, support teachers to maintain discipline and launch a national 'Truancy Watch' scheme. The National Curriculum would be replaced with a more flexible Minimum Curriculum Entitlement.

All major faith groups would be allowed to establish publicly-funded schools if they had sufficient community support, and independent schools would have to work with state schools if they wanted state funding.

There would be more access to further education, and the Student Loans Scheme for higher education would be replaced with a repayment scheme linked to earnings. The party also proposes that all 16- to 19-year-olds would receive



On the record: Paddy Ashdown (centre) outlining his party's manifesto during an interview with John Humphrys on BBC Radio 4's Today programme yesterday. Photograph: John Voos

the equivalent of two days' training a week.

The economy

Priorities would be to provide stability, to encourage long-

term investment and to promote enterprise and small business. The Bank of England would become an independent UK Reserve Bank, charged with keeping inflation low and accountable to Parliament.

Borrowing should not exceed total investment, and the government would be accountable to Parliament for keeping to that rule. Wasteful spending would be cut. Effective public-private partnerships would be

promoted, and councils' borrowing would be curtailed.

Jobs

Unemployment benefits would be turned into "working bene-

fits" paid to employers to recruit and train people. Investment in the infrastructure, promotion of small businesses and energy conservation will create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Business

Banks will be encouraged to develop new sources of private finance for small and medium businesses as well as new codes of banking practice. Red tape will be cut by stopping European institutions interfering and Whitehall departments from adding their own new rules to the European ones.

Regional development agencies would foster partnerships between business and local authorities, tourism would be promoted and employees would be given new rights. Firms would have to publish information on their investment achievements.

Industrial relations

The benefits of the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty would be extended to all UK employees, but new rules which unnecessarily harm job opportunities would be resisted.

Employees would be given new rights to consultation and participation in decisions. Profit-sharing and share-ownership schemes would be encouraged.

Consumers

Ombudsman schemes would help customers to get redress if they had complaints, and product standards and labelling would be improved. Food products with genetically modified ingredients would be clearly labelled.

An Office of Utility Regulation would be set up, and utilities would be asked to involve their customers in ownership and control of their companies. Independent regulation of financial services would be improved. The Monopolies and Mergers Commission would be merged with the Office of Fair Trading to promote competition.

The Environment

Taxes on pollution would be increased while income tax was cut. Every government policy would have environmental objectives built into it, and tough targets would be set to cut energy waste, reduce traffic congestion and control pollution.

Carbon dioxide emissions would be cut by 50 per cent from the 1990 level within 15 years. Central and local government would have to meet targets for sustainability and biodiversity.

A separate department for environment and energy policy would be set up, and the Environment Agency would be given stronger powers to enforce compliance with the law.

Animal welfare would be promoted through a dog registration scheme, new rules on transporting live animals and a ban on animal testing for cosmetics, weapons and tobacco. A free vote on hunting would be held in the Commons.

Transport

Public transport would be expanded through partnerships with the private sector. London Underground would remain in public ownership but would be given the right to seek private finance for new investment.

Freight on the railways would be trebled and passengers doubled by 2010. Railtrack would be given targets for investment, and if it failed the government would withhold public sub-

sidies and use the money to buy a controlling interest in it. On the roads, car tax would be cut to £10 for cars up to 1600cc, but petrol duty would go up by 4p a litre.

Housing

Houses would be built through public-private partnerships, and mortgage interest tax relief will be replaced with a first-time buyers' Mortgage Benefit. Over time, housing benefit for people renting would become part of the same system. By 2000, no one would be forced to sleep on the streets. Councils would be made to set up self-funding rent deposit schemes to help homeless people into private housing.

Rules forcing under-25s on benefit to live in shared houses would be scrapped.

Crime

An extra 3,000 police officers would be put on the beat within a year. Young offenders would be made to repay their debt to society, and citizens' service would help them to get involved in crime prevention schemes.

The Crown Prosecution Service will be overhauled and the use of community sentences encouraged in order to ensure that no one goes to prison unless it is essential to the public. A Royal Commission will be set up to tackle the problem of drugs.

Rural communities

The Liberal Democrats would work to replace the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy and would set up an independent Food Commission. Village schools and shops would be supported and rural areas would be helped through more affordable housing and better transport.

Arts and media

Media monopolies would be tackled, the BBC would be protected, and the National Lottery would be used to improve access to the arts. Film production in Britain would be promoted.

Health

The party would increase funding for the NHS by £540m a year, maintaining it as a comprehensive service free at the point of need and funded primarily from taxation. The aim would be to make the NHS more accountable and begin a shift towards preventive medicine.

Tobacco advertising and promotion would be banned. The party would make the Health Education Authority "truly independent" and free to criticise government policy. A Food Commission, independent of the agriculture ministry, would seek to ensure that food was healthy and safe; £200m would be invested each year to recruit more staff for frontline care. This would be enough for 10,000 extra nurses or 5,000 more doctors.

The party would also aim to cut hospital waiting lists to a maximum of six months over three years. There would be an end to the "two-tier" service in which treatment depends on the type of GP people go to. Free eye and dental checks would be restored. A National Inspectorate for Health and Social Care would be established to improve standards and promote patients' interests.

Political Reform

The aim would be to restore trust in British politics by end-

ing secrecy and guaranteeing people's rights and freedoms. A Bill of Rights would be passed and as a first step the European Convention on Human Rights would be incorporated into UK law. A Human Rights Commission would be set up to protect individual rights and a Ministry of Justice would be established. The party opposes the introduction of identity cards.

There would be a Freedom of Information Act establishing a citizen's right to know. Unnecessary quangos would be scrapped and there would be greater use of referendums.

Outdated institutions would need to be modernised, giving a bigger say to Britain's nations, regions and local communities. There would be home rule for Scotland and Wales and regional decision-making in England would be made more accountable.

Proportional representation would be introduced and there would be reforms to Parliament. Higher standards of conduct for politicians would be expected. There would be a fixed parliamentary term of four years.

The number of MPs in the Commons would be cut by 200 – a third – and the Lords would be transformed into a predominantly elected chamber. In Northern Ireland there would be a power-sharing executive to ensure a respect for individual liberties.

Opportunities

Individual self-reliance would be promoted, strengthening equality for all before the law. In employment the party would work for a society that cherishes diversity. There would be more help for the long-term unemployed to get them back into work and welfare system would be modernised to provide a more effective safety net for the disadvantaged, to encourage work without compulsion and to widen opportunities.

For older people there would be a minimum standard of living in retirement and there would be a "flexible decade of retirement" between the ages of 60 and 70.

For younger people there would be new rights and new responsibilities. All those between the ages of 16 and 19 would have the opportunity to work, learn, train or take a place on a new Citizen's Service where two years work for the community would be offered.

Families would benefit from a new system in which Income Support and Family Credit would be replaced by a simpler and more efficient Low Income Benefit. That would help people back to work.

Employers would face tougher obligations to introduce equal opportunities and the pensions system would be made fairer to women. Comprehensive legislation would be passed to ensure civil rights for disabled people. Britain would play a leading role in strengthening European legislation banning discrimination against ethnic minorities. Lesbians and gay men would enjoy equality before the law.

Foreign Policy

Britain needs to play a leading role in shaping Europe, democratising its institutions and strengthening its role as a promoter of prosperity, peace and security. Any major changes in Britain's relationship with Europe would have to be endorsed in a referendum. A plebiscite would have to endorse a single currency, but the party believes that it would bring low inflation and low interest rates.

Tax

A copy of the party's Annual Tax Contract would be delivered to each household following the Budget each year. There would be no taxation without explanation, no promises unless they have been costed and no more tax without tackling waste.

Under the banner "fair tax for all" the party would want to ensure that everyone contributes according to their ability to pay and that the burden is fairly shared. It would aim to take more of those on low incomes out of tax completely. There would be a clampdown on tax avoidance and evasion.

The basic rate of income tax would increase from 23p to 24p in the pound to help finance investment in education. The starting rate for the payment of taxation would increase by £200 to £4,245. This cut would be paid for by introducing new rate of income tax of 50 per cent payable on income over £100,000 a year.

Half a million people would be freed from taxation altogether. Five pence would be put on a packet of cigarettes, which would be used to restore free eye and dental checks and freeze prescription charges.

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Manifesto analysis: Strategy confronts painful truths about the limits of government and fiscal policy



Here I stand: Paddy Ashdown proudly displays the party's new manifesto outside the launch

Photograph: John Voos

Bold pledges to tax rich, but numbers do not add up

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The Liberal Democrats' manifesto presents economic policies that appear to have the courage of Labour's convictions.

Here is an ostentatiously honest economic strategy that confronts the painful truths about the limits on government and which makes some difficult choices about taxing the rich in order to alleviate the lot of the poor.

So, yesterday's manifesto promised independence for the Bank of England, in the context of membership of the single European currency.

Interest rate decisions would be taken out of the political sphere, subject to the Bank's accountability to Parliament for delivering low inflation.

The document also committed the Liberal Democrats, like Labour, to the tough "golden rule" for public borrowing.

Government spending would only be allowed to exceed revenues, an average over the course of the business cycle, by an amount which was equal to public-sector investment.

Setting such admirably clear rules for interest rates and government borrowing leaves the party with no option but to make a virtue of raising taxes, in order to spend more money on its priority - education and training.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party to say unequivocally that they would raise income tax.

A penny on the basic rate, taking it to 24p, would raise just the estimated £3.2bn backlog on repairing crumbling schools.

taxpayer on average pay would have to fork out an extra £4 a week.

Full marks to Paddy Ashdown for honesty in saying that taxes will have to rise, but the near-£2bn a year in extra revenues would not go far in the education system.

Nor has the party - any more than Labour - spelt out how it would fill the £1.5bn gap in public finances which will be opened up by halting the privatisation programme.

Yesterday's manifesto went a step further, by promising income redistribution, a theme addressed more explicitly here than in Labour's manifesto.

What it does not do is spell out the limits to reducing inequality through the tax system: the Liberal Democrats' painful truths turn out to be less honest than Labour's more modest proposals.

The Liberal Democrats would introduce a top rate of tax of 50p in the pound for people earning more than £100,000 a year, to pay for increased income tax thresholds that would take some low-paid people out of the tax net altogether and reduce income tax for the majority of taxpayers.

It sounds radical stuff, until you crunch through the numbers. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the poorest tenth of households in the country would gain on average 5 pence a week from these tax proposals, and the next four-tenths up would gain between 10p and 20p. Everybody in the top half of the income distribution would lose out between 5 pence a week near the middle

up to £11 a week at the very top. Paul Johnson, a researcher at the IFS, says: "You would have to spend an awful lot of money to make people at the bottom of the income distribution significantly better off." There are tens of millions of people on low incomes compared with the 140,000 taxpayers on more than £100,000 a year who would be expected to stump up.

The Liberal Democrats have one other tax wheeze - switching the burden of taxation from jobs and spending to pollution and the depletion of natural resources. They also promise to use new national indicators of well-being, which include measures of the quality of life and environmental sustainability.

It is hard to argue with such painless environmentalism - reduce tax on individuals and let the polluter pay. But here again, the manifesto ignores the problems of scale.

The taxes that raise the most government revenues - income tax, VAT and corporation tax - draw on an enormous tax base. Green tax rates would need to be exorbitantly high to raise a similar amount of revenue, because we spend far less on polluting activities, such as driving, than the consumer spending total on which VAT is levied, for instance.

There is nothing wrong with environmentally-friendly taxation. But Liberal Democrats stretch their honesty to breaking point when they pretend their proposal for a long-term shift from taxing wealth-creation to taxing pollution-creation would mark a radical transformation of the tax system.

EDUCATION

Radical schools plan at a price

Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent

The Liberal Democrats have a well-worn mantra on education policy - others may claim education is their priority and passion, but only if we are prepared to pay for improvement.

A pledge to put an extra penny in the pound on income tax to invest in education is Paddy Ashdown's best known, and most prominent election promise, and part of a package of measures which mark the Liberal Democrats out as the most radical of the three main parties on education.

Teachers, promised smaller class sizes and more cash for resources, would regard such a

deal as "an apple for the teacher with jam on it", as one delegate sceptically told his union conference this Easter.

However, the party which is least likely to win power on May 1 has also troubled to include the least concrete detail on the mechanics of its proposals.

Only the Liberal Democrats are promising to bring all schools, including grant maintained, back into a single framework under "light touch" local authority control.

Labour also promises to abolish GM status but will offer schools the option of staying at arm's length from local education authorities along the same lines as church schools. The Liberal Democrats are

against selection, but would leave the future of grammar schools to be decided locally. However, they omit to explain how local education authorities could measure public support or opposition to grammars.

On class size, the party goes beyond Labour's promise to a maximum of 30 for five-, six- and seven-year-olds, pledging to extend the same ceiling to all primary schools within five years.

The National Curriculum, to be tinkered with by Labour, would be cheerfully scrapped by the Liberal Democrats, who pledge to replace it with a teacher-pleasing "Minimum Curriculum Entitlement".

The party is also more generous than its rivals towards training and further education - the unfashionable Cinderella sector which frequently complains of losing out to schools and universities. In a radical, uncosted but highly expensive move, it promises to pay course fees for all adults not approved further education courses, which students must currently finance themselves.

The money would be paid into individual learning accounts available to every adult and including contributions from government, individuals and employers.

The Liberal Democrats, with £2bn annually in extra income tax to spend, sprinkle education spending pledges more liberally through their manifesto than the other parties. First call on the pot of money would be nursery education. Like Labour, it would scrap nursery vouchers and seek to offer early years education not only for four-year-olds but all three-year-olds whose parents wanted it.

The £2bn pot, looking somewhat elastic-sided, is also earmarked for increased investment in books and equipment, for higher education and primary class size reductions.

More jam on the apple for teachers is a £500m pledge over five years to tackle school repairs and maintenance. But the spending would only dent the estimated £3.2bn backlog on repairing crumbling schools.

LAW & ORDER

Taking a liberal route to the heart of crime

Patricia Wynn Davies

It was to be expected that if the three main political parties, only the Liberal Democrats would set out their policies on crime in a traditionally "liberal" context, and they alone have specifically chosen to group pledges on law and order alongside those on issues such as housing. In the context of wider social values, "Many people feel too frightened to leave their homes," the manifesto says, but adds: "Many do not have a decent home."

Thus there are four linked priorities: 3,000 more police officers on the beat; the building of more affordable and secure housing; the ending by 2000 of the sleeping-rough scandal; and the revival of Britain's sense of community.

The Lib Dems are the only main party to spell out that it would "encourage the use of community sentences, as an alternative to prison, where the result is likely to be less reoffending, and use prison sentences where they are essential to public protection or to make punishment effective".

The manifesto adds that the Lib Dems would concentrate resources on crime prevention and on increasing conviction rates, rather than on building prisons, and renews the party's call for a Royal Commission to develop policies for tackling the drugs problem "at its roots". It pledges to increase the elected membership of police authorities, and to create an accountable police authority for London. In the "secure communities" section the party says it would ensure that the police took "further steps to reduce the level of racial and homophobic violence", and put more police into rural areas.

A new Human Rights Commission and Bill of Rights would ensure equality before the law for lesbians and gay men, and the party would outlaw incitement to hatred and discrimination in housing and employment, on grounds of sexual orientation. Legislation would secure the civil rights of disabled people and the Commission for Racial Equality's code would be given statutory force. Immigration law too would be reformed - to enable "genuine" family reunions in Britain.

ENVIRONMENT

Host of green pledges leaves rivals red-faced

Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

The Liberal Democrats promise much more radical green policies than either the two main parties and, unlike their rivals, devote an entire manifesto chapter to the environment.

The most striking proposal is to have a "carbon tax" on coal, oil and gas. The money it will raise - the party has not yet said how much - would be used to cut VAT and employers' National Insurance Contributions.

Even if the party never has more than 30 MPs, it has played an important part in lifting environmental issues up the agenda. It did this with its 1992 and 1997 manifestos, and by having its MPs sponsor two important "green" private member's Bills which got through Parliament, on energy conservation and traffic reduction.

The party says the new carbon tax is needed for Britain to cut its annual emissions of climate-changing carbon dioxide gas by 30 per cent over 15 years. That target is more ambitious than the Conservatives' 10 to 15 per cent, or Labour's

proposed cut of 20 per cent by 2010. The cost of the annual tax disc for cars under 1600cc will be cut from £145 to £10 to boost sales of smaller vehicles which produce less pollution and carbon dioxide. The revenues lost by this tax cut will be replaced by putting the duty on road fuels up by 4p a litre.

Other green proposals include a levy on building developments on greenfield sites in town and country. Local councils will be allowed to bring in vehicle tolling systems for congested roads. VAT on energy-saving materials, such as insulation, will be cut from 15 to 5 per cent, the same as for electricity and gas. The Liberal Democrats promise to end fuel poverty in the 2 million lowest income households, with an insulation and draughtproofing programme, saving these homes an average £85 a year.

The party says it would double the number of passengers carried on Britain's railways by 2010. Charles Secrett, director of Friends of the Earth, said: "This is the greenest manifesto ever produced by any major party in Britain."

Crafted by cabinet of three

Ashdown added finishing touch to the document. **Barrie Clement** reports

The Liberal Democrats' 60-page manifesto was basically a committee job, with the final flourishes added by Paddy Ashdown, writes **Barrie Clement**. Last the party he accused of woolly-mindedness, the allegation often levelled against the Liberals, strategists have insisted all the pledges have been costed in detail.

About two years ago, Alan Beith, the deputy leader, was asked to take charge of the process, which involved prolonged consultation inside and outside the party. The long gestation period meant that, unlike the Conservative Party, "we cannot pull last minute rabbits from the hat".

Formally, the document is the responsibility of the 30-strong

Liberal Democrat policy committee and the parliamentary party, but there was an "inner cabinet" of three with the greatest degree of influence. Apart from Mr Ashdown, who chairs the policy committee, Lord Wallace of Saltaire took the role of rapporteur, and distilled the views of party members. Neil Stockley, head of policy, was responsible for its intellectual respectability.

There was an attempt to emphasise practicality. According to party sources, the 1992 election manifesto was concerned with processes, such as Europe and constitutional reform,

rather the "outcomes" such as smaller class sizes and shorter hospital waiting lists, which formed the centrepiece of yesterday's document. Education and health were the "big ideas". Although the party prefers not to see itself on the right-left political spectrum, Liberal Democrat officials conceded that its preoccupation with the need for competition in the economy could be described as right-wing, while its call for increased taxation to pay for improvements in education and health was vaguely left-wing. "The preferred formulation is 'radical but pragmatic'."

Over the last 18 months, drafts of the document have been presented to the policy committee and the party's parliamentary representatives, where it has been amended. There was also consultation with outside research organisations and trade associations. Members get a look-in, according to party officials. Their representatives at annual conferences elect more than half the policy committee, the other half being co-opted worthies and ex officio party figures. The 4,000 representatives also engage in debates over policy papers which feed into the manifesto. Two weeks ago it was given the final spit and polish by the policy committee.

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TV network buys up last days of the cult

Tim Cornwell
Los Angeles

Giving new meaning to the phrase cult film, a US network has announced plans to turn a now-familiar tale of castration, comets, and tragicomic death into a television movie.

Several Hollywood producers had publicly declared the Heaven's Gate cult off-limits on the grounds of poor taste and a weak plot.

But the ABC network says it has now signed a deal to produce a film based on the story of its lone survivor. And if emerging details of the cult's life are anything to go by, there is plenty of bait to go around. In the weeks before their suicides, cult members went gambling in Las Vegas, watched killer whales leap at San Diego's Sea World, and took a bus trip through California.

The lone survivor, a computer designer, Richard Ford, known as "Rio D'Angelo" in the cult, left the group four weeks before its 39 members committed mass suicide in their home north of San Diego.



Neon lights: Las Vegas, the gambling capital of America, was one of the places visited by members of the cult in the weeks before their suicides.

Source, to do some web site work.

Its chairman Peter Locke insisted it would be a "spiritual and compelling" account that dealt with cult members as "productive human beings". ABC itself was hardly trumpeting the film deal yesterday, and there may be lingering concerns about how, exactly, the story will unfold.

"We will stick to the human element," Mr Matzorkis, who will serve as an executive producer, told the *Los Angeles Times*. The trips of the last days are recorded in a meticulous ledger. Its last entry shows they mailed their next month's rent, and paid a \$250 library fine. Having filmed the videotapes in which each and every member described why they planned to leave this earth, they went out for pizza and a movie.

He became the subject of a media manhunt when he was named as the source of an anonymous call alerting police to the deaths. As late as Thursday, ABC had insisted it was not

developing a film. But the sudden change of heart came as the network began running trailers for an exclusive interview with Mr Ford on its television news magazine,

"Prime Time Live". Network officials insisted there was no connection, but netting "Rio" was clearly a major scoop. Mr Ford reportedly drove to the hill-top villa and

discovered the bodies after receiving two videotapes in which members announced they were leaving their earthly "vehicles" to join a UFO trailing the Hale-Bopp comet. The film deal was

arranged by Nick Matzorkis, the Beverly Hills businessman for whom he worked as a World Wide Web designer, and who rapidly became his agent. It also involves the Kushner-

Locke company, which has produced television films with Dolly Parton and other stars, and had coincidentally employed Mr Ford when it contracted with the cult's business arm, Higher

British aid for Colombian refugee crisis

Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

With US aid to Colombia largely frozen because of so-called drug-smuggling "de-certification", Britain has stepped in to provide badly needed aid to 7,000 refugees fleeing a bloody three-way military conflict.

Despite a recent history of kidnappings of British Petroleum workers in Colombia, the British government was the first to provide food, medicine, tents and mattresses this week to refugees along the north-western coast of the violence-torn South American nation.

Rural Colombians are used to warfare. Marxist guerrillas control most areas beyond the city suburbs. But the north-west of the country, close to the Pacific coast, is now the scene of warfare that makes Vietnam almost pale by comparison.

Guerrillas of the so-called Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) long ruled the jungle-clad Uraba region where soldiers, mostly conscripts brought in from other regions, feared to tread. Then, recently, along came so-called paramilitary groups who bear a striking resemblance to the regular army but wear their base-

ball-style caps backwards, cover their epaulettes and appear far better fed and paid than the usual conscripts. Most Colombians believe they are regular or retired soldiers in the pay of the government or cocaine lords who control much of the country's economy.

While these two groups are battling it out with everything from rifles to mortars, the Colombian airforce has been bombarding the north-west in an effort to crush the guerrillas. That is why 7,000 people fled their homes in the last two weeks and why the British government is providing aid.

While the US has been playing politics over Colombia—the American embassy in Bogotá regards itself as a kind of *de facto* government—British diplomats have been quietly trying to influence events on the ground.

Britain had already set up a "distance-learning programme" to educate young Colombians via new computer technology. It was the British government that turned a rubbish dump in the cocaine-cradle city of Medellín into an open-air theatre a few years ago. "It was in line with that tradition that we stepped in," said Johnny Welsh, British embassy spokesman in Bogotá.

Barclays denies bail link to jailed banker

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

Spain's disgraced former banking supremo, Moxio Conde, sentenced to six years in jail for fraud, has until Monday morning to raise a staggering £10m bail, and Madrid's financial world is awash with rumours that a British bank is orchestrating the operation.

Spanish National Radio reported yesterday that Barclays was seeking to raise the money. The bank denies the report. "Barclays has nothing to do with any such operation," said the bank's Madrid spokesman yesterday. "The reports, which we think are being spread by another bank, are unfounded."

Midland, whose name is also circulating, "categorically denies" it was involved.

Spanish banks appear to have reeled away in horror at the prospect of shoring up the man held responsible for the gravest crisis in Spain's banking history. The Spanish news agency Efe, citing "sources close to the operation", reported on Thursday that an unnamed British bank had stepped in.

Barclays Madrid spokesman said: "It would be very unlikely for a Spanish bank to lend to Mr Conde because such an operation cannot be judged purely on financial terms". Mr Conde had worked with Barclays during his glory days as head of the prestigious Banesto bank in the early 1990s.

Mr Conde, once one of the most powerful figures in Spain, was sacked from Banesto in 1993, accused of creating a "black hole" of £3bn.

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Zaire's rebels prove a powerful force for change in Africa

The US is implicated in the conflict, reports Mary Braid

In a matter of months Zaire's rebel forces have stripped the once mighty dictator, President Mobutu Sese Seko, of any lingering illusions of invincibility, snatching vast swathes of his territory as if it was candy from the hands of a toddler.

As they advance this week on the southern, mineral-rich provinces of Kasai and Shaba, threatening the diamond mines of Mbuji-Mayi which have served as Mr Mobutu's personal bank for three corrupt decades, the rebels appear to be changing forever the face of Africa's third largest country.

They enter peace talks in South Africa this weekend in a strong position; not bad for a force rubbished by Western diplomats as recently as February.

But the repercussions of the rebellion are being felt beyond Zaire's borders across a vast tract of Africa. It has affected the course of the civil war devastating Sudan to the north and nudged the Angolan peace process back on track tens of thousands of miles to the south by closing the 'supply routes' through Zaire crucial to UNITA rebels.

Whether a bigger game plan was envisaged in October when the Rwandan-backed Banyamulenge Totis began their revolt in eastern Zaire is a matter of debate. But the question has spawned a multitude of conspiracy theories implicating foreign powers, including the United States.

The most extreme conspiracies claim the US has a master plan for the region. This view is most popular with the French, utterly wretched about their waning influence in Africa.

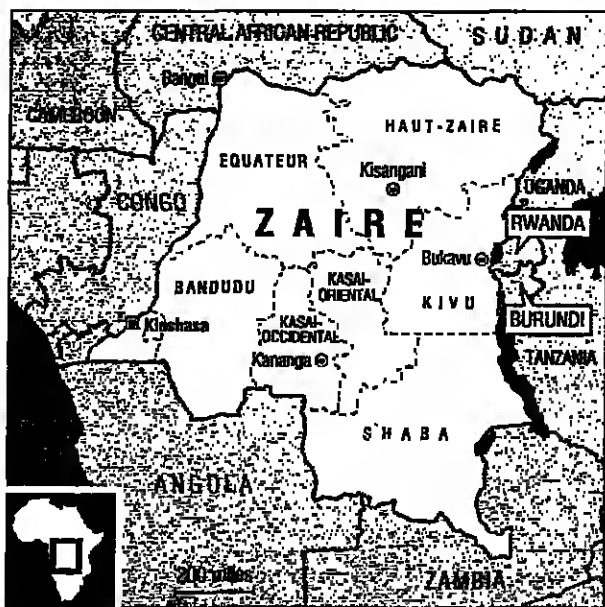
But African political analysts also give it credence. The existence of an overall US game plan is not an outlandish proposition, says Richard Cornwall of the Africa Institute of South Africa. He believes an American political "wish list" and US commercial interests have shaped events.

Although the world's attention has been fixed on Zaire and its border with Rwanda, Mr Cornwall places Sudan at the centre of a complex political web. The US's desire to see the overthrow of Sudan's Islamic government - which it accuses of sponsoring international terrorism - led it to provide



Life as usual: Zairean rebels greet each other in downtown Bukavu, which they took over nearly a week ago

Photograph: Reuters



independence leaders who have won power through the barrel of a gun, but whose leadership is characterised by good governance.

Eritreans, Ethiopians and Ugandans have all been reported fighting alongside the Banyamulenge, says Mr Cornwall.

Mr Museveni is a US favourite. But his support for Uganda and Rwanda has brought it into direct conflict with the French which have seen their influence plummet with the change in government in Rwanda and the demise of Mr Mobutu in Zaire.

The French are furious. Their influence in Africa is collapsing like a house of cards

When France recently tried to step in to save Mobutu's skin the US blocked it.

Of all the old European colonial powers the French alone stubbornly cling to the notion of empire in Africa and believe their influence there is inextricably linked with international standing.

Beyond vain strutting on the world stage Mr Cornwall believes French conflict with the US rests on competition for Africa's vast untapped reserves of minerals and oil. Zaire is rich in cobalt, copper and diamonds and substantial oil finds have been made recently in Angola and Sudan.

The French are furious at the US. Their influence is col-

lapsing like a house of cards. And who is responsible? These Yankee Johnny-Come-Latelys who never had as much interest before," he says.

The animosity between the French and the US is obvious. Their diplomats in the region have fallen out publicly and quite spectacularly. But Professor Jack Spence, of the Royal Institute for International Affairs, in London, believes this owes more to French paranoia than US commercial or political competitiveness. "Africa really comes quite far down the US's list of priorities," he says. "I doubt President Clinton gives it much thought."

Crawford Young, an authority on Zaire based at the University of Wisconsin, similarly dismisses claims about a US masterplan. "How many times did Warren Christopher visit Africa?" he asks.

US policy in the area, he argues, is an example of pre-

ventative politics, driven by the fear that Zaire will fragment and its instability spill over into neighbouring countries. "The US interest is a negative interest. It is a keenness to avoid a humanitarian disaster that would call for an expensive international operation."

Many remain unconvinced. Just how much commercial interests are shaping events now may become clearer with time. What is certain now, however, is that a reborn Zaire, cleansed of corruption, could become the economic powerhouse for the entire region.

It has the potential to provide hydro-electric power for the whole of southern Africa. Mining experts say it is hard to exaggerate the wealth of its mineral reserves. Whether they have interfered or not, it is difficult to imagine that its commercial potential is going unnoticed by western and African governments.

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international

Mothers' vigil puts Turkey to shame

Christopher de Bellaigue
Istanbul

Stroll down Istiklal Street at noon today, and you might be charmed by Istanbul's slightly down-at-heel, Italianate promenade. Reach the prestigious Galatasaray High School, however, and you begin to feel uncomfortable. Roughly 300 Turks sit outside the school gates. Their reproachful silence distinguishes them from the surrounding jollity. Some hold photographs, most of young men. These are the Saturday Mothers.

Entry requirements are simple: the loss of a relative or friend in police custody. New recruits are welcomed; each month, Ankara's Human Rights Association makes additions to the 700-odd Turks they reckon have disappeared while in the hands of the Turkish police.

The relatives of missing Turks have been meeting each Saturday since May 1995, when Emine Ocak, her husband and a few activists, staged the first protest in Istiklal Street. Mr and Mrs Ocak, members

of Turkey's Alewite religious minority, had recently traced the body of their missing son to a municipal grave. They say he was arrested after a bloody confrontation between Alewites and police and was not seen since. "We just want to know who killed our son," pleaded Mr Ocak.

Mr and Mrs Ocak have been joined by others awaiting justice: from humble beginnings, their club has grown, acquiring a certain celebrity. Pop stars dedicate songs to them and liberal politicians court their support. Even the authorities pay them backhanded compliments. When Istanbul hosted Habitat II, a big conference on the future of large cities, the governor had the Saturday Mothers cleared with the thoroughness employed to shoo away prostitutes and stray dogs.

Common to many Turks remembered in Istiklal Street is political activism. In the early 1980s, the police targeted extreme leftists. Now, the Kurdish minority has most to fear. Some are arrested on suspicion of helping the Kurdish Workers Party, an often brutal nationalist organisation.

Others appear to have done little more than refuse to inform on friends and relatives. Typically, as in the case of Hasan Ocak, the police deny arresting the missing person. He is simply never seen again.

Murvet Ozgen, one of the Saturday Mothers' newest recruits, fears her father suffered this fate. On 27 February, Filiz Ozgen, a septuagenarian Kurd, and apparently a politically inactive one, was arrested near his home in the south-eastern town of Diyarbakir. The local military police deny taking in Mr Ozgen, although eye-witnesses reports suggest they did. Ms Ozgen says her father does not have access to the injections and inhaler he needs to control his chronic asthma. "He may be dead already," she said.

The government has begun making concessions, reducing detention without trial. And instead of lucky-fingered riot police, the Interior Ministry has begun sending a minibus to Istiklal Street each Saturday, where the protesters are invited to register the names of the missing.



Soft sell: An employee of the South Korean soft drinks company, Bumyang, demonstrating yesterday in front of the US embassy in Seoul against Coca-Cola's plan to set up a distribution network in Korea. His headband says 'fighting with unity' Photograph: AP

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Tears before bedtime for party planners

Stephen Vines
Hong Kong

Hong Kong
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handover

Celebrations often bring out the worst in families. And never more so than when the generations are at daggers drawn and barely speaking to each other. Imagine, therefore, the complexities of organising one of the world's biggest celebrations involving two parties who are every bit as intense in their distrust of each other as cousins who have nursed a grievance for decades.

Yesterday it emerged that Britain and China had reached outline agreement on the invitation list for the £18.5m bash which will mark the end of British colonial rule and China's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong on 30 June.

The problems of who will sit next to whom have yet to come. Four thousand of the sparring parties' closest friends will be there; both sides will nominate about 1,500 attendees each and jointly pick some 400 VIPs at foreign-minister level. The balance will be made up by journalists, of which those actually attending the party will be swamped by the estimated 4,000 expected in town to cover it. The BBC alone is sending just under 200 people.

China seems to have secured the upper hand in the great invitation-list wrangle by ensuring that no heads of state or gov-

ernment will attend, thus robbing Britain of the opportunity to stage a more high-level event.

The most senior representatives from the British side will be the Prince of Wales and the new foreign secretary. China is likely to send Qian Qichen, its vice-premier and foreign minister.

The really important Chinese leaders are expected only after the British have left. It is likely that Jiang Zemin, the President and Communist Party leader, may even come on 1 July. And the celebrations planned by China and its local supporters to mark "The Glorious Reunification of the Motherland" will dwarf those of the handover.

Now that an outline guest list is in place and an agreement has been reached on a very simple indoor military parade, Britain and China have to agree on what will be said in the speeches. Expect more acrimony before the party's over.

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France faces up to anxieties of the global society

Mary Dejevsky, leaving Paris after a two-year posting, finds the latest bout of Gallic self-doubt a little misplaced

Just over four years ago I was preparing to leave my last foreign posting, in Moscow, and looking back over the uniqueness of what we correspondents had witnessed: the accelerated decline and fall of a world power. The Soviet Union was disbanded at midnight on 25 December 1991 and vanished into history.

So it was with a sense of déjà vu that I found my departure after two years in Paris coinciding with frenzied discussion of a book, *Will France disappear?*, by Jean-Claude Barreau, head of the Institute of Demography, which broaches the possibility that France as we know it might not survive the social and economic spasms of the next generation. It might be dismissed as another bout of introspection to which Gallic souls are periodically disposed, but the book, and the attention it has received, suggest something more is afoot.

A hitherto confident nation seems to be assailed by self-doubt. The question people are asking, taken to its conclusion by Barreau, is whether the French state and being French are compatible with participation in the modern world. This question is quite different from France's nostalgia for its dying villages and rural way of life. It is different, too, from the fervent defence of the French language and culture against the perceived "Anglo-Saxon" (mostly American) onslaught.

Rather, it has to do with a Europe that seems to be encroaching on French identity and threatening sovereignty. It has to do with first, second- and third-generation immigrants who resist assimilation and turn to Islam. It has to do with an "apartheid" that has developed between the suburbs of French cities and the chic city centres. It has to do with standards of education and assumptions about behaviour it has to do with the decline of colonial influence, the Cold War victory for market economics and "globalisation". All these are treated by Barreau as threats that impinge particularly on France partly because, he argues, of its lack of a single ethnic identity

and its secular state. The past two years have certainly given the French a taste of what "joining the modern world" might mean. Opposition to the resumption of nuclear testing was found shocking and "disloyal" when it came from France's partners in Europe. By itself, France was unable to match action to rhetoric in Bosnia or in its traditional stamping grounds in Africa.

At home, unemployment, at 12.7 per cent, is one of the highest in Europe. There have been race riots on housing estates and Islamic terrorist bombs, with agents among French-born and French-educated young men, and there have been strikes and protests.

The first round, in autumn 1995, came within an ace of overthrowing the government and halted the rationalisation of state pensions and reform of the railways.

Round two, this winter, reduced the pensionable age for lorry drivers and halted public

instantly letting them have their way. A machievellian interpretation would be that this is exactly the impression a reformist government of a conservative people wants to create, while pursuing, by stealth, the modernisation it deems necessary.

And there is evidence not only that more change is in progress than many realise, but that the French are more change-minded than they are given credit for - even if the changes they would like to see do not coincide with those wanted by the government.

Notwithstanding the protests of the past two years, the welfare system, including such sensitive areas as health and social security, is being reformed. Domestic finances (with the help of a little cheating) are being brought into line; road haulage, air routes and telecommunications are being opened to competition, albeit slowly and reluctantly. The restructuring of the railways has begun.

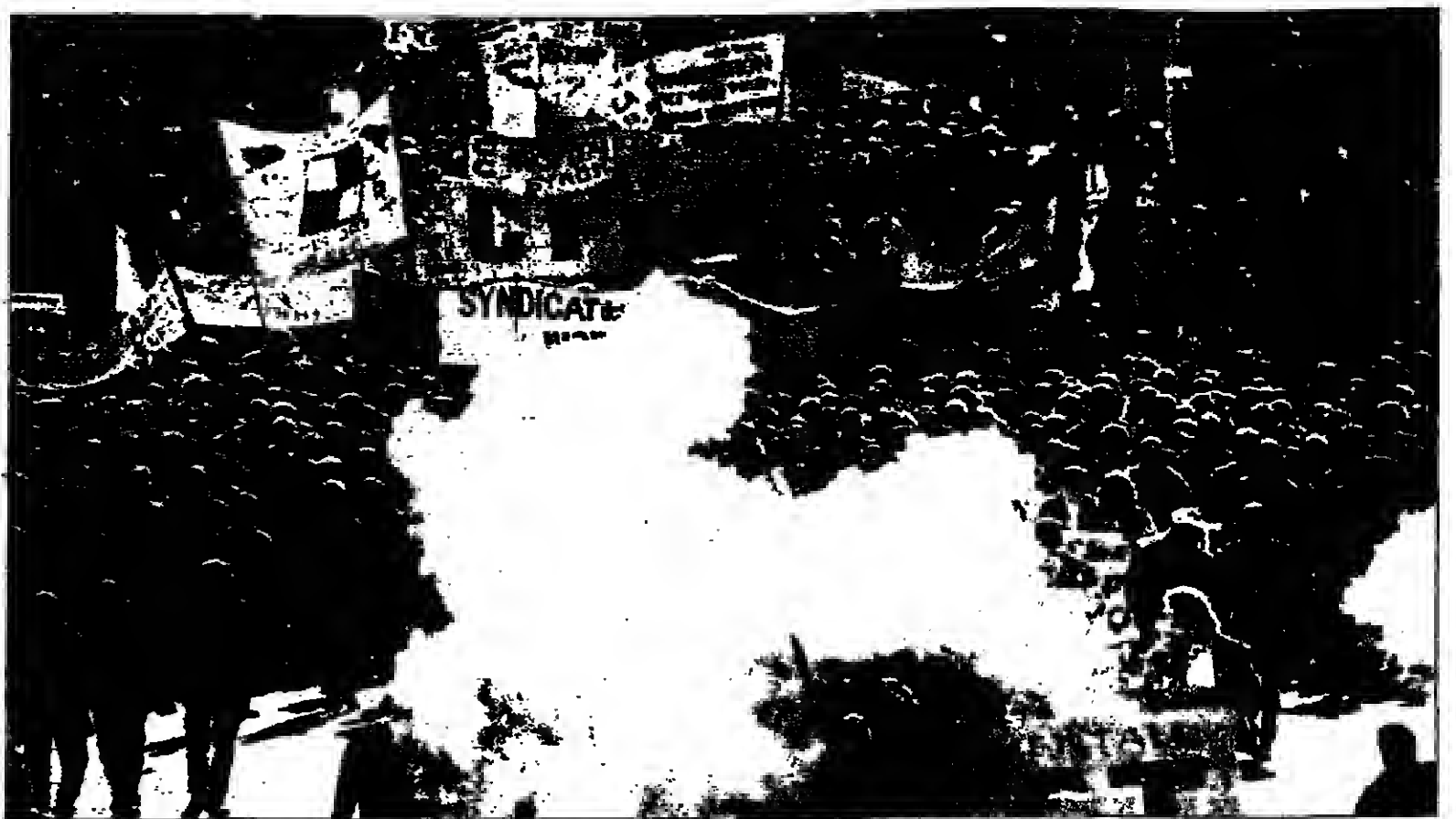
So much for the changes

Trying to balance the social state with the market is what the French call 'the third way'

transport in a dozen cities. Barreau may exaggerate when he asks whether France will "disappear". To broach the question in such sweeping terms, however, well illustrates a feeling that permeates almost every area of French life: the feeling that France is at a junction between tradition and modernity and must choose one or the other.

A widespread impression, born of the labour and anti-privatisation protests, is that the French have dug in their heels and that the government is re-

engineered from the top. Other - perhaps even more telling - changes are being demanded from the bottom. The elite caste that comprises the French political establishment is being challenged. To an outsider, the challenge seems timid. To well-protected insiders, who include the Prime Minister and President, it probably seems to shake the very pillars that support their authority. Political links with big business; the elite administration school, ENA (should ENA be burnt down? asked one mag-



Labourer comparisons: A rally against austerity measures, another manifestation of the angst gripping a once self-confident nation

azine recently); the tameness of the national media - all are coming under scrutiny.

A whole system of patronage, which benefits the establishment of the left as much as the right, is under threat. France is still a country where the establishment, compared with the "Anglo-Saxon" world, is closed and where the media - or enough of them to make a difference - can be controlled in the name of stability and national cohesion.

The weakening of France's traditional centralising underpinnings - good and bad - however, would not mean that France had ceased to exist. Nor are they all likely to be lost. A recent OECD report blaming France's generous benefits system and job security for high unemployment and budget deficit was dismissed by Paris with the words "the OECD's choices are not those of France". Trying to balance the requirements of a "social state" with the demands of the market is what is loosely described by French politicians, perhaps wistfully, as "the third way".

France could be fortunate. It might just find that its "third way" eventually meets up with the "Anglo-Saxon" as they start to retreat from the consequences of all-out competition and find themselves acknowledging the need for state social intervention to keep the peace. To reach that point, however, in terms of competitiveness, openness, and social mobility, France still has a long way to go.

significant shorts

China tops the world execution league

Amnesty International said world executions hit a record 4,200 in 1996, and urged countries to sign a UN motion on scrapping capital punishment. China led the way with more than 3,500 executions, followed by Ukraine, Russia and Iran. Amnesty said it feared that Mohammad Asad, an Iranian lawyer reported to have been arrested in 1993, may be at risk of imminent execution. Reuters - Geneva

Car workers march for jobs

Belgian police clashed with Renault workers who marched through Brussels to try to save their jobs and force EU governments to beef up employment protection. Police turned water cannon on the demonstrators, who threw stones, eggs and firecrackers, waved staves and tried to tear down barbed-wire barricades. Reuters - Brussels

Date set for Albania operation

Italy said a multinational force of 6,000 troops it plans to lead into Albania should begin deploying in the week starting 14 April. Italy is expected to provide 2,000 troops, France 1,000, Greece 700, Turkey 500, Spain 300 and Romania 400. Austria and Denmark said they were considering participation. Reuters - Rome

Mostar's joint force steps out

After months of ethnic violence and political manoeuvring, 100 Muslim and Bosnian Croat policemen lined up to form the first joint police force in Mostar. A joint force, an apparently small step, represented a large psychological advance for the Muslim-Croat Federation which rules half of Bosnia. AP - Mostar

Rapists' charter repealed

Peru's Congress repealed a 1924 law that allows rapists to go free if they marry their victims. Reuters - Lima

Sour end to velvet divorce

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

Four years after the Czech-Slovak "velvet divorce", the ex-spouses went at it hammer and tong in one of central Europe's most acerbic disputes since the end of Communism. With an intensity that was more blood-red than velvet, Czech and Slovak politicians and commentators traded abuse on issues ranging from the Czechs' stress to join Nato to whether the Czech president had called the Slovak prime minister paranoid.

Some Czech politicians, even after an independent Slovak republic has existed for four years, have been unable to rid themselves of a feeling of superiority... on the basis of which they comment on internal political events in their neighbour, a Slovak Foreign Ministry statement fumed last week.

At the heart of the dispute lies an awareness on both sides that the Czech Republic and Slovakia have gone down markedly different paths since they laid to rest Czechoslovakia peacefully at the end of 1992. The Czechs, though increasingly burdened with economic problems, are front-line candidates to join the European Union and Nato,

while Slovakia is in the West's bad books, almost entirely because of the antics of its Prime Minister, Vladimir Meciar.

The row reached its zenith on Tuesday when Mr Meciar, who is viewed by his domestic opponents and foreign critics as an authoritarian bully, called off a visit to Prague. It would have been his first since Slovakia gained independence.

His spokeswoman said he was reacting partly to a statement attributed to the Czech Prime Minister, Vaclav Klaus. The Prague media had quoted Mr Klaus, who has a reputation for arrogance, as saying that his government had more important things to do than prepare for a Meciar visit.

Matters grew more serious when the Slovak government indicated it might try to block Czech accession to Nato on the grounds that the Czech and Slovak states were still arguing over the terms of the 1993 divorce settlement.

Among the unresolved issues are the cross-ownership of banks and division of Czechoslovak gold reserves and state treasure. But it is doubtful that these matters are serious enough to give Nato second thoughts about inviting the Czechs to join the alliance in July.

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obituaries / gazette

Dame Guinevere Tilney

Guinevere Tilney is best known for her time as Margaret Thatcher's wardrobe mistress, from 1975, when Thatcher was elected Leader of the Conservative Party, to 1983, when she won her second general election victory.

She displayed a resolution in her dealings with Lady Thatcher which few men could show. To Tilney was owed the deepening of the Thatcher voice, the softening of the hair style, and the simplification of the clothes in Lady Thatcher's great electoral years. Yet, she was paid nothing for her pains and troubles, except, in 1984, in the form of what she, imitating the New Zealand novelist Ngila Marsh, like to call "me dammy".

Guinevere was a very apt baptismal name for her; for she had both the elegance and the resolution which is ascribed to

King Arthur's legendary consort. Yet she had done much more with her life than being dresser to a famous prime minister.

She was the daughter of a family embedded in public life — her father, Sir Hamilton Grant, was a distinguished public servant. In 1944 she married a serving officer, Captain Lionel Hunter, who died three years later, and then in 1954 she married her beloved second husband, John Tilney. The Conservative MP for Weymouth, Lymington from 1950 to 1974, he was a figure of considerable influence in Conservative Party politics. But it was his wife who did more public work.

From an early age, Guinevere determined to she would not be restricted to a conventional well-off rural English life. She became a champion of

women's rights on the international stage; and a formidable advocate of human rights' causes at the United Nations. Yet, she never lost her sense of fun; and vastly enjoyed her own tale of going on the same diet as the Prime Minister, before then Mrs Thatcher's first visit to China. "She had to slim down", said Lady Tilney, "so, I had to show her how to do it."

One of the most interesting things about Guinevere Tilney was that she usually looked flamboyant, but was the very reverse of flamboyant when she did what she regarded as serious business. She had a curious, though not, in her view, paternalistic, interest in the offshoots of the British Empire: she was, for some years, Chairman of the Empire Ladies Luncheon Club. Although in the last decade of

this century, that organisation may sound preposterous, the fact is that it raised more money for indigent nations, without evident publicity, than any other private charity; most of this was due to Guinevere Tilney.

And when, at the United Nations, as UK Representative to the Commission on the Status of Women, 1970-73, sitting on various committees, she argued — fought would perhaps be a better word — for the rights of women she, as she once told me, had three things in mind. The first was to end female castration, especially in Africa. The second was to persuade non-Christian communities to end their systems of arranged marriage. "After all," she once said, "Denis and Margaret met by accident."

The third great cause of her

life, always argued with aplomb, but also with charm, was to make Margaret Thatcher Prime Minister. Lady Tilney, however, as far as I know, had no woman of her own age in whom she could confide; and she did not trust the men of her own generation. Guinevere Tilney was always there. She was there to soothe, to encourage, and to support.

I was once walking down the Committee Room Corridor of the House of Commons with a friend who was a Labour MP. Coming towards us was a diminutive and elegant figure. "There," said my friend, "is your typical Tory MP, well-brushed, well-dressed, and rich. I had no advertisement for women in this House."

"Let me," I said, introducing Judith Hart to Guinevere Tilney, "explain that she is not

an MP, that she is much more involved in Third World affairs than you are; and the fact that she looks nicer than you do is more a matter of taste than of wealth." The two women went off together. The only thing I heard thereafter was from Judith Hart: "She's a nice woman. That Tory."

Patrick Cosgrave

Guinevere Grant, campaigner and political adviser; born 8 September 1916; Vice-President National Council of Women of Great Britain; 1958-61, President 1961-63; UK Representative on United Nations Commission on Status of Women 1970-73; Adviser to Margaret Thatcher MP 1975-83; DBE 1984; married 1944 Captain Lionel Hunter (died 1947; one son), 1954 Sir John Tilney (died 1994); died London 4 April 1997.



Tilney: "She's a nice woman. That Tory" Photograph: Desmond O'Hare

Sir Norman Alexander

Norman Alexander, in addition to his distinguished work as a physicist, was instrumental in the establishment of many of the modern Commonwealth universities, including Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria, and the Universities of the West Indies, the South Pacific and Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland.

Alexander was born in Mangapiko, New Zealand, one of eight children of second-generation immigrant farmers from England, Scotland and Denmark. Like all farm children of pre-electricity, pro-tractor days, he worked barefoot on his allotted farm tasks, developing the personal resilience, the practical approach to problems and the understanding and respect for Maori and other cultures that marked his career.

A brilliant scholar from his days at the village school, he graduated from Auckland University with first class honours in physics in 1927, and came to Cambridge in 1930 on a two-year scholarship to the Cavendish Laboratory under his compatriot Ernest Rutherford. When this scholarship expired he funded the rest of his PhD through a post as Demonstrator in Physics at King's College, London.

In 1936, newly married to a fellow PhD student Elizabeth Caldwell, he moved to Raffles College in Singapore as Professor of Physics. There, one of his extra-curricular projects was to develop, for the Royal Navy, his own method and tools for plotting the projections they needed in setting up a chain of

radio direction-finding stations. Once launched on the rock, he set about designing and making a machine that would draw great circle bearings plotted on Mercator charts, the method the Navy preferred: until his intervention this had involved solving thousands of spherical triangles, a formidable task in the days before calculators.

Such skills received further honing first in Changi Gaol and later in the notorious Sime Road internment camp, after the fall of Singapore to Japan in 1942. Fellow prisoners remember Alexander's lectures in physics, his sharp intellect, his scientific thinking, ingenious practicality, humour and scrupulously fair humanity. His daily argument with a cell mate was set up for the express purpose of intellectual survival under brutalising conditions.

It was in Changi too that he worked with fellow prisoners in building a salt evaporation plant, from materials permitted to be scrounged from immediately outside Changi's walls or made by the ingenuity and skills of fellow inmates. Before he was moved to Sime Road, their small industrial plant was providing the camp hospital with surgical spirit (fermented from sugarcane juice and rice and then distilled) and other products including forms of the antacid Milk of Magnesia and "Milton" sterilising fluid.

He returned to Singapore after his release as soon as his health permitted, to join his colleagues in restarting teaching at

Raffles College. Entrance examinations had to be set but no body could be sure what students had been able to study during the occupation. To optimise their chances he set the following question: "You may have found none of the questions on this paper to your liking. If that is the case, set yourself a question and answer it."

In 1952, Alexander moved to Nigeria to take up the post of Professor of Physics at University College, Ibadan, an internal college of London University that became Ibadan University on Nigeria's independence in 1960. Here his department developed magnetic and ionospheric geophysical research, contributing to the International Geophysical Year 1957-58 and becoming one of the two satellite tracking stations of the new US satellite programme. The magnetic station he established to his own design became one of the most important geophysical observatories at low latitudes and his first "home-grown" PhD students went on to become distinguished geophysicists in the international academic community.

Soon after the death of his wife in 1958 and his remarriage to Constance Geary, Professor of Education at Ibadan, he moved to the Middle East Technical University, in Ankara, to teach engineering physics, but gave up the post after a year on the invitation to become first Vice-Chancellor of Ahmadu Bello University, Northern Nigeria, a post he held until 1966.

From 1966, Alexander was heavily involved as a kind of "freelance Vice-Chancellor", offering his expertise to help in the setting-up of other Commonwealth universities, including the University of the West Indies in 1966 and the new University of the South Pacific in Fiji from 1966 to 1968.

He returned to Britain in 1968, but his appointment as Advisor to the Ministry of Overseas Development in 1970 took him to the development of another federal university, that of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, where he authored the *Alexander Report* (1970) on the development of university campuses in each country and the unified development of higher education and vocational and teacher training. In 1971 he was appointed by the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs to the Governing Body of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, a post he held until his retirement in 1973.

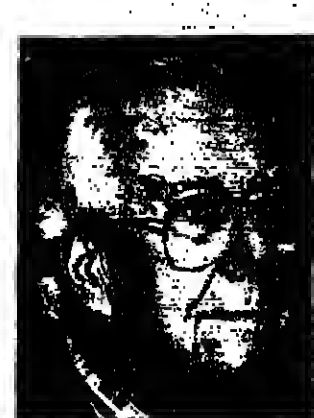
Villagers of Reddisham in Suffolk, where he lived after his return to Britain, remember some of Alexander's practical engineering skills, as applied to their bus shelter, in the repairs to the church using geological specimens definitely not from Suffolk, and in the military accurate, fibreglass Roman soldiers' helmets made for the children's nativity play. On the death of his second wife, he moved to Devonshire, where he married Evelyn Clark, an education officer from North-

ern Nigeria. Here he maintained the house and garden through a unique blend of scientific principle, practical skill and the use of New Zealand fencing wire, while a succession of nurses and visitors recruited to help with his wife's failing health were driven into the ground by his continued passion for hard argument. Until the last few days of his life, he maintained his intellectual work by writing up his unique experience of young Commonwealth Universities (with a book planned) and analysing the milking pattern of the herd of cows visible from his window.

He was a man of enormous integrity, approachability, and perceptiveness who could and would argue the finer points of the late Beethoven quartets, the rigging of Nelson's ships, or the military details of Alexander's battles, with equal enthusiasm and expertise.

Mary Harris

Norman Stanley Alexander, physicist and university administrator; born Mangapiko, New Zealand 7 October 1907; Professor of Physics, Raffles College, Singapore 1936-52 (University of Malaya from 1949); Professor of Physics, University College, Ibadan, Nigeria 1952-60; CBE 1959; Vice-Chancellor, Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria 1961-66; Kt 1966; married 1935 Elizabeth Caldwell (one son, two daughters; died 1958), 1959 Constance Geary (died 1991), 1992 Evelyn Clark; died 26 March 1997.



Cox: "Lillibulero"

David Vassall Cox, composer; born Broadstairs, Kent 4 February 1916; married 1954 Barbara Butcher (died 1982; one son, two daughters), 1992 Sybil Bell; died Pratt's Bottom 31 January 1997.



Approachability: Alexander (right) with Dr John Parry, at University College, Ibadan, Nigeria in 1958

David Cox

Anyone who has ever tuned in to hear the ows on the BBC World Service over the past 30 years will have become familiar with the lively, foot-tapping arrangement of "Lillibulero" which has so reassuringly introduced the programme on the hour. Its arranger was David Cox, for many years a gentle and most popular figure in the corridors of the BBC.

All his life a man of Kent, he was born in Broadstairs and except for his early years, when the family lived in Australia, and a short time in London after the death of his first wife, he was devoted to his homes first in Duntun Green, then Maggie Bottom and latterly at Pratt's

Bottom, all in the Ovingington and Sevenoaks area. On returning to England from Australia in 1935 he entered the Royal College of Music, where his composition teachers were Ralph Vaughan Williams and Herbert Howells, with another composer, Arthur Benjamin, for piano, from 1937 to 1939. At the same time he was an organ scholar at Worcester College, Oxford, until 1940, serving also as assistant organist at Christ Church Cathedral. His war service was with the RAF from 1941 to 1945, when he also played the clarinet in the RAF Band.

After the war Cox joined the BBC, where he was to remain until his retirement in

1976. His first appointment was as a music producer and with the World Service, where he started with the Latin American services. From there he went to the Third Programme before returning to Bush House in 1956 to become music organiser for the overseas services for the rest of his career.

On his retirement his association with the BBC continued until 1989 as a valuable member of the Audition Panel, listening anonymously to would-be young broadcasters, as well as being a member of the larger group of prestigious musicians who gave their time as members of the outside Listening Panel, independently re-

porting on the standards of first broadcasts of artists. Both of these tasks he took very seriously and reported with perception and fairness.

The music of Peter Warlock was particularly dear to David Cox and gives a clue to his own compositional style. This is heard to its best in his *Three Songs from John Donne* of 1959 and the *Five Songs after John Milton* of 1975. In addition to his arrangements and signature tunes, his best known orchestral work is the overture *London Calling* which he wrote for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the BBC External Services and first performed in 1982, in which he incorporated

not only "Lillibulero" but other themes associated with the service.

Choral works also feature in his output, many of them festive commissions. Among these are the *Cantata of Beasts* (1957), *Songs of Earth and Air*, on texts of Dryden (1960) and *A Greek Cantata* (1967). In 1969 his one opera, *The Children in the Forest*, used his own libretto adapted from the Arthur Ransome story and was written for the Cookham Festival. A number of attractive piano works and music for recorder and piano make up his principal instrumental works.

The *Henry Wood Proms* (1980) and *Debussy Orchestral*

Music (1974) will remain his main books but his contributions to the study of the music of Warlock should not be forgotten, notably in *Peter Warlock: a centenary celebration* (1994) which he compiled and edited with John Bishop. He was a regular contributor to musical periodicals and wrote a number of articles for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980).

His particular musical interests were for English music of the 20th century, with French music coming a close second. After his retirement he considered writing a philosophical study on the essence and meaning of music but this never pro-

gressed beyond long and fascinating discussions on the topic with his musical friends and colleagues. He also wrote a novel, based in Yugoslavia, which remains unpublished.

David Cox was a good friend in the best sense of the term. His quiet, sincere manner and occasional hesitancy in conversation concealed a sharp, searching and perceptive mind. A fine linguist and fascinating conversationalist, his gently dry humour matched a remarkable patience occasionally disturbed only by some of the more extremes of modern music or the later trends in music broadcasting.

Graham Melville-Mason

Births, Marriages & Deaths

DEATHS

MAXWELL: Peacefully, at Denham Manor, in Denham, Buckinghamshire, aged 89 years, Dr Robert Maxwell, general practitioner in East Ham for over 40 years. Widower of Maria, much-loved father of Bernard and grandfather of Harriet. Funeral on Tuesday 8 April, 2.30pm, at Golders Green Crematorium. No flowers please, but donations to the Cameron Fund, EMA Charities, EMA House, London WC1N 1JZ.

SHARP: Robert, on 30 March, aged 73. Funeral service to be held at the City of Norwich (Earlham) Crematorium, on Wednesday 9 April at 2.30pm. Enquiries to Peter Taylor Funeral Services. Telephone 01603 760787.

For Gazette Births, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 0171-293 2012 or fax to 0171-293 2018. Charges are 65.50 a line (VAT extra).

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

TODAY The Duke of York attends ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Air Force Veterans' Association at Royal Air Force Cranwell, Lincolnshire. The Princess Royal will attend the 15th Anniversary of the Grand National at Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool. TOMORROW The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be at the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am. In the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am. In the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am. In the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will be the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 10am.

Birthdays

TODAY: Professor John Albery, Master of University College, Oxford, 61; Vice Admiral Sir Neil Anderson, former Chief of Defence Staff (New Zealand), 70; Miss Jane Asher, actress, 51; Mr Michael Bryant, actor, 69; Mr Andrew Buxton, chairman Barclays Bank, 58; Mr Allan Clarke, rock singer, 55; Mr Roger Corman, film director and producer, 71; Baroness Delacourt-Smith of Alton, 81; Mr John Dick, former Director, N.M. Rothschild & Sons, 84; Miss Agatha Fells, singer with Alma, 57; Mr Tom Finney, footballer, 75; Dr John Gilbert MP, 70; Mr Arthur Hailey, author, 77; Mr Nigel Hawthorne, actor, 68; Sir Douglas Hensley, former Auditor-General, 78; Professor Roman Herzog, President of Germany, 63; Professor Denis Lawton, Chairman, London University School Examinations and Assessment Council, 66; Admiral Sir Michael Livesey, former Chief of Naval Personnel, 61; Professor Donald Lynden-Bell, astronomer, 62; Professor Peter Moore, former Principal, London Business School, 69; Mr Stanley Orme MP, 74; Mr Gregory Peck, actor, 81; Miss Jennifer Penney, ballerina, 51; General Colin Powell, former chairman, American Joint Chiefs of Staff, 60; Lord Rockley, chairman, Kleinwort Benson, 63; Miss Anne Scott-James, author and journalist, 84.

TOMORROW: Mr Francis Belsky, sculptor, 76; Sir Paul Berrford MP, 51; Mr Rodney Bickerstaffe, sociologist and general secretary, UNISON, 52; Mr Roy Bremner, impressionist, 36; Mr John Brooke-Little, Clarenceau King of Arms, 70; Mr Ivan Callan, 75; Miss Anne Campbell MP, 57; Miss Joan Carville, soprano, 66; Mr Bernard Carter, painter and etcher, 77; Mr Anthony Chubb, former chairman, Fosco, 69; Mr Roger Cook, broadcaster and journalist, 54;

Mr Paul Daniels, magician, 59; Admiral Sir Desmond Dwyer, 87; Julian Faber, former chairman, Willis, Faber and Dumas, 80; Mr Willis Hall, writer, 88; Dr David Ingham, former Vice-Chancellor, University of Kent at Canterbury, 78; Sir John Knox, former High Court judge, 72; Lord Moore of Wolverton, former private secretary to the Queen, 76; The Rev Ian Paisley, MP and MEP, 71; Miss Felicity Palmer, mezzo-soprano, 53; Mr André Previn, composer and conductor, 68; Mr Dudley Sutton, actor, 64; Mr Dilip Vengsarkar, cricketer, 41; Professor James D. Watson, geneticist and Nobel prize-winner, 69; Sir Marcus Wasley Bt, Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, 72.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Births: Thomas Hobbes, philosopher, 1588; Giovanni Giacomo Cassanova, Chevalier de Stange, lover and adventurer, 1724; Jean-Honoré Fragonard, painter, 1732; Joseph Lister, first Baron Lister, surgeon and pioneer of antiseptics in surgery, 1827; Spencer Tracy, actor, 1900; Bette (Ruiz) Elizabeth Davis, actress, 1908. Deaths: Georges-Jacques Danton, French revolutionary leader, guillotined, 1794; George Herbert, 6th Earl of Carnarvon, Egyptologist, 1923; Douglas MacArthur, general, 1964; Howard Hughes, aviator, industrialist and film producer, 1976; Chiang Kai-shek, statesman and soldier, 1975; Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Travers Harris Bt, former chief of Bomber Command, 1984. On this day: Oscar Wilde was arrested for offences committed with Lord Alfred Douglas, 1895; the second Battle of the Somme ended, 1918; Sir Winston Churchill resigned as Prime Minister, 1955; in Sicily, Mount Etna erupted, followed by violent Goya of lava, 1971; Sir Harold Wilson resigned as Prime Minister, 1976. To-

day is the Feast Day of St Albert of Montecorvino, St Dersel-Gadara, St Ethelburga of Lymington, St Gerald of Saavedra-Majour and St Vincent Ferrer.

TOMORROW: Births: Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, playwright and poet, 1671; René Lillibulero, jewellery designer, 1860; Harry Houdini (Erich Weiss), stage magician and escape artist, 1874; Anthony Herman Gerard Folker, aircraft designer, 1890; Sir John Benjamin, poet, 1906. Deaths: Richard I (Coeur de Lion), King of England, killed in battle 1199; Albrecht Dürer, artist, 1528; Igor Fyodorovich Stravinsky, composer, 1971. On this day: St Paul's Cathedral and other churches were badly damaged following an earthquake tremor in London, 1580; George Washington was elected as first US president, 1789; the first modern Olympic Games were inaugurated at Athens, 1896; the United States declared war on Germany, 1917. Today is the Feast Day of St Celestine I, pope, St Eusebius of Caesarea, St Marcellinus of Carthage, St Prudentinus of Troyes and St William of Eskdale.

Lectures

TODAY: National Gallery: James Heard, "Cremity and Kindness (Dr. Mace, Christ Blessing the Children)", 12pm. Victoria and Albert Museum: Maxine Sutherland, "The Silhouette of Fashion and Underwear, 1947 onwards", 2.30pm. Tate Gallery: Laurence Binyon, "Hogarth's Conversation Studies", 1pm. British Museum: George Hart, "Egyptian Myths: Osiris, Isis and the 'Vegetation of Horus'", 1.15pm. TOMORROW: Tate Gallery: Sarah O'Brien Webb, "Commentary: Art and Anti-Art", 4pm.

Where moral compasses won't work

faith & reason

The other night I found myself arguing with one of the Beirut hostages about Myra Hindley. This was not a dream, but a curate's dinner party. The general sentiment among these good Christian people seemed to be that Hizbollah must be forgiven, Myra Hindley might be forgiven, but journalism was wholly unforgivable. Yet forgiving Myra Hindley seems hard, even for Christians.

The hostage's argument was that Myra Hindley, whom he visits, had been led into evil by Ian Brady. What she had done was terrible, but she had done it because she was in love with a madman, and she had since repented, very deeply. So it was wrong to keep her in prison to gratify the prejudices of *Sun* readers. And at first sight there is a lot to be said for this, especially when you consider that the man keeping her in prison is Michael Howard. The Home Secretary, I tell my children, is a man you can set your moral compass by: each time you have the chance to exercise power over people as defenceless as prisoners are, ask yourself what Michael Howard would do and try the opposite.

But there are regions towards the pole where compasses cannot help, and as the conversation continued, I found myself wondering whether Myra Hindley's case might not be such a moral extremity — a place where even Michael Howard might be right. This has nothing to do with deterrence. What Myra Hindley did is not something most people can be deterred from, because it is not something they could be tempted into. Any honest parent must confess to the temptation of infanticide, however fleeting; but the urge to torture children to death is something very different. Nor do I think she must be kept in to

Myra Hindley was acting 'under orders' when she committed her crimes — just as soldiers are who do terrible things in war. Why then, asks Andrew Brown, should she be punished and not them.

Indeed, the analogy with Nazis is an interesting and fruitful one, because Hindley's defenders argue that she was only following the urgings of the man she loved. Why should we say that obeying orders is on excuse, while obeying a lover is not? Obeying orders is usually a much nobler and more dangerous occupation for a soldier than going along with your lover is — and besides, the love which allows or impels you to torture small children is not what is usually meant by the term.

Yet soldiers, and especially airmen, do terrible things for which they are never punished. Modern weapons make dropping napalm on refugee camps do things to children as terrible as anything

Myra Hindley managed. Bombing civilians would surely be recognised as a war crime if it weren't so terribly effective.

The difference may be patriotism, but that can't be the whole difference. The motives that actually make young men fight tend to overlap with some of those which actuated Hindley: loyalty, and a love of fun among them. Fighting men have almost always recognised the virtues of their opponents, because they share them. The cause is almost secondary. No, the difference, I found myself arguing, was innocence. The young men in aeroplanes have an innocence because they do not really know the effects of their bombs: still less do they come back again and again to watch the effect on different children, as Brady and Hindley did.

It's very difficult to imagine what it might be like to repent of your crimes: possibly more difficult than to imagine what it would be like to commit them. We are told that she has repented, and that we should forgive her, by a man who has forgiven his own torturers, and who says, convincingly, that he could not live without this forgiveness. But instinctively, even in a dinner party full of Christian people, "Sun readers" was a term of moral opprobrium, the majority were clearly in favour of locking her away for the rest of her life. Of course it is unfair that she should have come to stand as the symbol of evil incarnate. But it does not seem to me desperately unchristian to ask her to bear this, and to play the role gracefully. If that means spending the rest of her life in prison, as a penance, that at least offers some meaning to her suffering in an extraordinary sense, by being unjustly imprisoned she is justly paying her debt to society.

A party dedicated to fairness and freedom

This week we have been trying to present the best case that can be made from the manifestos for voting for the main parties. Of the three, yesterday's from the Liberal Democrats is by far the most challenging, meaning that it would change Britain's political landscape most dramatically. But that observation is not an underhand reference to the electoral fact that the Liberal Democrats will not form the next government and so can afford to be bold while the serious contenders cower. They are radical not merely because it suits them: the Lib Dems put rare and special weight on the second of the great political ideas which make up their title, democracy.

Much of the case for voting for them rests on their faith in us, the citizenry. The Lib Dems are optimists. They believe we actively wish for a higher stake in our government and would make use of the stronger democracy their manifesto proposes - proportional representation, a predominantly elected second chamber, new powers for local authorities, more referenda. That's its radicalism. None of those changes in the way of governing guarantee any changes in the policies themselves. The Lib Dems want to open the doors and windows at Westminster, renew political life in Cardiff and Edinburgh and - promising eventually a local income tax - inject new vitality into local government. How we might

use this more powerful democracy is up to us.

Elsewhere, the manifesto groans with the Lib Dems' own suggestions for what they would do if they formed a majority government. Of course, given our electoral system and their standing in the polls, this is fantasy politics. But the days when they could be fairly accused of administrative innocence are gone, thanks to their weight of numbers in local politics. Besides, a lot of effort has clearly gone into getting the fiscal arithmetic right, and it is all set out here (and in an accompanying document on costs) in black and white.

Putting a clear political tag on the Lib Dems is not easy: the manifesto bursts with ideas without betraying an ideology. There are echoes here of pristine Victorian liberalism, the creed of John Stuart Mill who believed in the educative nature of political participation, pavement upwards. The Liberal Democrats approach Europe in this way. They have no fear of federalism, provided we strive to make the institutions of the European Union more answerable. They would do this by making the European Parliament an active legislature, overseeing the work of the Council of Ministers and the European Commission.

But there are strong signals too of muscular collectivism. We could be made healthier by increasing taxes on tobacco, greener by altering the balance of taxes on petrol and

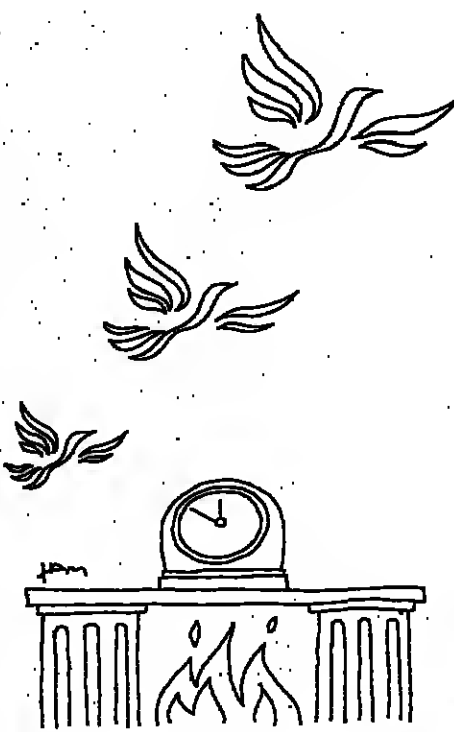
public transport subsidy, better educated, by an extensive and expensive programme for the schools.

Locally, the Lib Dem state would be active, too. Councils would get involved in economic affairs, through development agencies. They would set prices for road use in congested areas, using the proceeds to improve public transport - and cycle ways. The Liberal Democrats believe strongly, too, in that branch of the Welfare State which is not always recognised as such - the town and country planning system. Their manifesto promises tough controls on development outside the urban envelope. Woe betide private house-builders who buy up green fields in the hope of extending suburbia.

Sometimes the recipe is for less government. In the only mainstream manifesto to mention gays and lesbians, the Lib Dems confirm their position as the most liberal of the national parties. They straightforwardly promise the repeal of that notorious clause in the 1988 Local Government Act forbidding "encouragement" of those nameless activities which so upset Mrs Thatcher and her Cabinet colleagues. Meanwhile they burnish their pink credentials by promising to crack down on homophobic attacks while - a coy phrase, but the meaning is clear - encouraging the police to become more representative of the communities they serve.

In economic life, Liberal Democratic government would balance freedom and restraint. Some markets are roundly denounced, among them those in British-made arms and in products made overseas by child, slave or forced labour. This is the only manifesto this week that dares talk about excessive concentration of media power, promising intervention to stop mergers or take-overs that damage diversity.

Rupert Murdoch is not mentioned by name, but as good as. For the Lib Dems are prepared to use words and phrases that were on the tips of Labour and Tory tongues but could not be uttered. Words such as local education authority, gay rights, Rupert Murdoch, council tax, European Parliament, public transport and fox hunting. It is not that they have a cut and dried policy for each. (Fox hunting and hare coursing are, they say, to be put to a free vote in the House of Commons.) But, on the evidence of this manifesto, the Liberal Democrats have no fear of the thought police who seem these days to be stalking the rest of British politics. This is a party easily patronised and laughed at by the big battalions. But for the rest of us, the best argument for the Liberal Democrats is to imagine politics without them - as a simple, stifling and self-censoring struggle between the Tories and New Labour. That would be, we think, intolerable.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Get out and vote - for anybody except that insulting chicken

Sir: Swampy invites us (Letters, 2 April) to take direct action but not to bother voting, because all the main parties are the same. If we must vote, he says, let us spoil our ballot papers with the words "none of the above", to register our dislike of all candidates.

Can I vote against Swampy, if ever his (or anybody else's) single-issue obsession began to interfere with my life? No, because he's not standing for election: he's too busy taking direct action. Thank God the British National Party don't see parliamentary democracy in the same way.

Don't be anti-democratic, Swampy - take the people with you, and ask being accountable to them. Who is going to know how many ballot papers were spoiled with your formula? Will they be counted? Or will they just be lumped together with the lazy, the apathetic, and the uninterested?

GREGORY GUDGEON
Hydon Heath, Surrey

Sir: "Swampy" believes that our political system is a farce. But for all its faults it is the system we have got. The local and general elections on 1 May are an opportunity to vote for candidates who share Swampy's opposition to road and airport building. It may not be much of a chance to express views in which you believe, but why just throw it away?

Since 1979 the Conservative government has completed over 400 road schemes, including 160 major bypasses, on their own figures.

It's not just the Tories. The Liberal Democrat MP for Newbury, David Rendel, has supported the destructive bypass even after the former transport minister Stephen Norris has admitted it was an error. What about New Labour? It took them eight drafts of their transport policy to achieve a commitment to "review" the roads programme. How deeply reassuring of nothing.

In many constituencies there are candidates who have opposed road building, and can be relied on to do so. They are the Green Party candidates.

JOHN NORRIS
Richmond upon Thames

Sir: As a Labour councillor and a magistrate, I am interested in the quality of public life. I'm appalled by the Tories sending a bloke dressed as a chicken after Tony Blair. What do they think they're playing at?

What an insult to the democratic process: it is certainly at odds with the image that nice man on his soapbox is trying to put about.

ROGER CRISP
Southend-on-Sea, Essex

supermarkets and more restaurants." (Leading article, 3 April) If this is something to be proud of, I am in despair.

Five years ago there were in fact many more restaurants than there are now. Most of them closed in 1993 along with everyone else. The figures are distorted because McDonalds, Pizza Hut et al now classify themselves as restaurants.

Since a national supermarket opened just outside my local market town, two years ago, two out of three family bakers have shut; the town centre grocers has shut; the post office has shut and three village stores within the area have closed.

Do you really think that having more mobile phones is a good thing?

JEREMY O'GORMAN
Littlebury, Essex

Sir: Labour, we are told, will take 250,000 young unemployed people off welfare, though over what period they have not said. Before we get too excited it may be worth bearing in mind the following quotation from the Labour Force Survey: "Since summer 1993 the number of people aged under 25 who were unemployed (according to the International Labour Organisation's definition) has fallen by 264,000."

If Labour are to subsidise employers taking on young unemployed with a £60 per week tax break for six months, where will the

new jobs come from? All this will mean is that employers will, until the target number has been met, just employ young people. They may even shed a few others to ensure they get the benefit of a tax break.

NIALL HAMMOND
Dawlish, Devon

Sir: Last September I wrote to Kenneth Clarke urging him, in the November 1996 budget, to introduce the transfer of tax allowances between married partners, as now promised in the Conservative election manifesto.

The reply came from an Inland Revenue official who assured me that he was speaking in accordance with "principles approved by the Chancellor". It said that the Government had first proposed doing this in 1986, but "did not feel that there was sufficient [public] support to go ahead with such a far-reaching reform".

STEVE BAGNALL
Kingham, Oxfordshire

Sir: A bit too late, isn't it? The Tories are at pains to tell us all the good things they are prepared to do during the next five years if they are re-elected. I would like to know why they didn't do them during the 17 years they have been in power.

FH CASTELLANOS
Wisbech, Cambridgeshire

No Red peril in our twin town

Sir: For many years, town twinning has been seen as an excellent way of promoting social and cultural relationships between nations.

So when Jerry Hayes comments that "Harlow council is a left-wing... authority... twinned with somewhere in the Eastern bloc" (My Week, 31 March), I find myself in despair.

Is Harlow's MP so out of touch with life in general that he still believes the "Eastern bloc" exists?

And is he so out of touch with life in Harlow that he doesn't know our town (not our council) is twinned with Havrov in the Czech Republic - a state which is now seeking EU membership?

RALPH ROWLAND
Chair, Harlow Town Twinning Association
Harlow, Essex

Chance for a tea and biscuits donor

Sir: Yesterday I gave my four-monthly pint of blood. Everyone who is able should try to give at least once. It's neither painful nor nasty, and someone somewhere benefits.

Afterwards donors are offered tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits. I was surprised to learn that the blood donating and supply service pays for these out of its own funds. I'd like to encourage the giant food corporations to sponsor refreshments in blood-donor centres. It could only do their image good. I'm certain shareholders would approve of an annual report demonstrating such generosity to the community at large.

SANDRA SHULMAN
London NW6

Pussycat of Bodmin

Sir: You published on 4 April a photograph of "a rare sighting of the Beast of Bodmin". Am I to understand that the infamous "beast" is no more than a domestic cat or two (judging by the size of the sheep and stone wall also in the picture). Or is it indeed a larger creature and the sheep and walls in Bodmin Moor are much larger than anywhere else in the country?

HARRY COLSON
Guildford, Surrey

Steering clear

Sir: Your story regarding Richard Branson, Virgin and a specific project to develop the potential of the Royal Yacht Britannia (report, 29 March) was very interesting but sadly inaccurate. Richard Branson has not looked at that particular project, and the person who did look at it from our company had told the promoters that we were not interested some time before your article was published.

WILL WHITEHORN
Director
Virgin Group Ltd
London W8

Gentlemen's dilemma

Sir: Jo Brand (column, 29 March) must lead a very sheltered life. In this part of the country, the generation brought up with "officers' ladies, NCOs' wives, and other ranks' women", would be likely to give a very frosty reception to Jo Brand if she referred to any woman other than as a "lady", whereas the same word would make their daughters squirm. It's hell, I tell you.

DAVID FOSTER
Whitfield, Suffolk

LETTER from THE EDITOR

Well, I think all of us in the newspaper trade can congratulate ourselves on an excellent first week of the campaign, conducted according to the finest traditions of British journalism. We are beating them, you see; it is politicians all, hacks four. Sex acts in public parks, men dressed as rhinos and foxes, and a fight between two chickens have been the weapons used to keep serious issues away from public life, and very successful they've been. Well done, all!

That said, today's front-page story on pensions is, to my mind, our most important domestic news of the week. That's a real scandal, not a Sun one. Under-informed and worried people are encouraged to engage in insufficiently protected financial relationships with the pension companies, who are among the greatest and most powerful barons of modern Britain. For tens of thousands of people, often frugal and careful, it is the financial equivalent of very unsafe sex indeed.

And where are the politicians, whose job must include regulating this? It is not as if they haven't been warned. This story is not a re-run of the great pensions fiasco of the late Eighties - but there are strong echoes. Then, people lost big sums of money because they were bribed by the Government to leave occupational pension schemes and buy into private schemes, often with big hidden charges. As it happens, the junior minister defending this duff legislation in 1986 was John Major. But the wider point is that it was a failure, not simply of individual ministers, but of the process itself, a failure of parliamentary scrutiny of vital legislation. Some 350,000 people were affected and things, it seems, have got little better since. Those who still say that politics and political reform don't matter to the real world might like to chew on that.

It was a new experience for me, but it is going to become routine for most of us. Opening *The Independent's* on-line debating forum earlier this week, I lost my Net virginity (an

appropriate image. I guess, since our election site is <http://www.virgin.net> - is done with Virgin Net). Two hours passed in a flash as I tapped out responses to a bewildering range of *Independent* cybernauts and passing trade who wanted to talk about the election. They learned what was going on on the front page, and what we thought about Blair, Major etc.

But what did I learn? First that this works; it has advantages over the traditional letters page, since readers can argue with us properly, rather than by stately broadside. The disadvantages are that you progress

'It was a new experience for me, but it is going to become routine for most of us. Opening our on-line forum this week, I lost my Net virginity'

by sentences or phrases, rather than by considered paragraphs; and that it eats up time. But it was a curiously comfortable, intimate pub-like atmosphere.

Most talkers were, I guess, young. Though a few electronic hecklers swept through, and one confused tapper was looking excitedly for sex talk, they seemed well informed about politics and had serious questions - about the way that sleaze had dominated early coverage of the campaign, the privatisation of London Underground, pension reform and so on. My strongest impression - and it's a gross generalisation - was of people whose political outlook could not be described by any single adjective, never mind party. Many were guardedly pro-Thatcher, anti-European but also strongly libertarian and green; it was, almost, Porridge-meets-Swampy. Are they purely People of the Net, or is there a big political constituency out there hiding beyond the frontiers of current parties?

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

For the past 10 years, conventional TV news programmes have been haemorrhaging viewers under 50 at a phenomenal rate - Kirsty Young, Channel 5's news presenter

David Dimbleby presents it. It is part of the Constitution that all major events have to be presented by a Dimbleby - Jeremy Paxman, TV presenter, on the BBC's election night coverage

The one thing I learnt as Margaret Thatcher's chief whip was that there is no limit to the capacity of human beings to absorb flattery - Lord Wakeham

I think you have to be deranged to want to be famous - Colin Firth, star of the film *Fever Pitch*, and Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*

Some might benefit from psychotherapy but we would never suggest that because they would walk straight out of the door - Philip Logan, co-director of the gymnasium favoured by Diana, Princess of Wales, discussing his clientele

My belief is that aliens were not involved in these people's deaths. However we have to keep an open mind - Simon Burgess of the insurance company that underwrote the Heaven's Gate suicide cult for \$1m per member in the event of death through alien attack

If yoww saft enuff ter cum dahn 'ere agoin wum, yoww tay ull be spile' - New road sign in Dudley (trans: 'If you are daft enough to come down here, your tea will be spoiled')

Rush to stage Gandhi's funeral

Sir: I was interested to read in John Walsh's interview (29 March) what the five-year-old Gita Mehta remembered of Gandhi's funeral and how it compared with his funeral as portrayed in the film *Gandhi*.

My uncle, Sir Thomas Elmhirst, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Air Force at the time, wrote an account of the somewhat *ad hoc* funeral arrangements in his recollections (privately published by his son Roger).

He had returned from a morning game of golf with his wife to find Air Commodore Mukerjee waiting to tell him that Gandhi had been shot dead in a nearby garden. He noted with some relief that the assassin was not a Muslim. An hour later my uncle was informed that Pandit Nehru and his cabinet had decreed that Gandhi's funeral was to be a "state funeral". It was to take place the following day and to be organised by the three Chiefs of Staff (of whom my uncle was chairman). A million people were expected to turn up.

In his own words, "There was no time to be lost. I telephoned the other members of the committee, Lieutenant-General Roy Bucher and Vice-Admiral Ted Parry, who both came to my bungalow at once. I provided pens and paper (and whiskey and soda). We were joined by Defence Secretary H M Patel and got to work."

Roy Bucher was unable to spare

any soldiers to guard the route, Ted Parry had two or three dozen sailors, which left about a thousand clerks, mechanics and signalmen from the Air Force, (men unaccustomed to ceremonial or guard duties) to guard the pyre.

All three thought that a gun carriage would be unsuitable. Roy Bucher suggested a four-wheel cart. My uncle thought that sailors should haul it and Ted Parry agreed (perhaps this was later changed to the lorry which Ms Mehta saw).

There was a five-mile route with no hope of any servicemen to line it. That was left to the police.

My uncle and his committee were not responsible for the pyre itself. Having decided that Englishmen would be out of place at the pyre, they arranged to pay their last respects as the procession began. The following morning, however, he received a telephone call to say that Lord Mountbatten and his family would be attending the burning ceremony and that the Chiefs of Staff would also be expected to be there. All three protested, saying that it would be inappropriate to do so, but they were overruled by the Governor General (Mountbatten), whose word was law.

I wonder how much time Sir Richard Attenborough had to arrange the film version! PAUL ELMHIRST
Stillington, North Yorkshire



After some desperate British stage-management, Gandhi's funeral pyre blazes in New Delhi in 1948

Photograph: AP

Plenty of time for doctors to rewrite the Hippocratic Oath

Sir: It is surprising that, as a BMA member, Mr Thomson (letter, 2 April) was unaware of the association's attempts to update the Hippocratic Oath. The concept of a formal commitment to shared professional values in a form which is relevant to modern practice is an ideal which the BMA has been discussing for several years. Doctors in Sheffield and Liverpool, Asia and the Americas have responded by sending us their

drafts and comments. The BMA's aim now in publicising a draft text is precisely to encourage more to do so.

It is impossible to find a form of words to suit every perspective and so we have concentrated on core values which we hope will be thoroughly analysed and constructively argued. Selective and inaccurate quoting of the draft, such as that relating to abortion in Mr Thomson's letter, is unhelpful in our attempt to achieve

consensus amongst the medical profession.

We anticipate a year of further debate before the text will be finalised by the BMA and all the countries represented in the World Medical Association, and so Mr Thomson has plenty of time to suggest improvements.

A W MACARA
Chairman of Council
British Medical Association
London WC1

Drinking is bad for would-be fathers too

Sir: The suggestion that doctors would not dare tell a drinking man who wanted to father children to cut out drinking is quite false ("Nice girls don't drink, do they?", 3 April). It is well known that heavy drinking and smoking depress the sperm count. I would always tell men in this situation that they ought to reduce both.

I advise pregnant women to drink alcohol sparingly. I am quite sure that a few glasses of wine per month do no damage at all to the foetus.

GRANT WINSTOCK
Wotton, SW18

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. (Fax: 0171-293 2856; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) and include a daytime telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. We regret we are unable to acknowledge unpublished letters.

the saturday story

Many of its cities and regions are flourishing, but the state of Italy is ill. Having failed to respond to treatment, can the patient still be saved, asks David Walker



Resurrection in Italy: a panel from Piero della Francesca's cycle on the history of True Cross in the church of San Francesco, Arezzo

A nation in need of a miracle

After seven years in *restaurato*, it was possible this Easter once again to see Piero della Francesca's magnificent cycle depicting the discovery and verification of the True Cross. Constantine dreams; his mother, St Helena, has the cross dug up and—in the panel above—tests its power to resurrect.

At least you could see the left-hand half of the story, if you booked in advance, signed an official disclaimer, donned a hard hat and climbed the scaffolding that surrounds it. The fabulous sequence of frescoes in San Francesco in Arezzo, under cover for nearly a decade while being lovingly redone by government experts, will not be on full view before the turn of the century. But the bits of the Italian state concerned with the rescue of the Pios in Arezzo—like the recovery and re-presentation of his extraordinary pregnant Madonna in nearby Monterchi—are local and communal, involving specialist agencies operating a long way from Rome.

Arezzo and Vicenza, Genoa and Turin: these are inheritors of the Medici, the city-state tradition, republican and Roman. Not Rome. The Italian nation-state runs from the capital works only sporadically. During the month to come travellers are going to be hit by strikes by air traffic controllers, police, railway workers and petrol distributors, all protesting at national government actions. Even the schools are in danger of seizing up: the Italian education minister has just launched an appeal to try and stop a flood of early retirements by teachers—a result of the latest, rather ineffectual squeeze on state spending.

Confindustria, representing 110,000 medium and big businesses, has pledged "radical opposition" to the decision by Romano Prodi's government to raise corporate taxes rather than cut public spending more. One phrase resonates in Italian political conversation these days

— it is "going down into the piazza", their equivalent of talking to the streets.

This is more than Italian politics as perpetual theatre. It's only 11 months since Prodi's centre-left Olive Tree coalition took power as yet another attempt to cleanse and renew. And yet this weekend its survival beyond the spring looks highly uncertain, though it is still one of the shortest-lived administrations since the war.

A year ago hopes were high. It was not just that the Prodi government would continue the reform effort. His coalition with the ex-Communists, the Democratic Party of the Left, promised a new start—the first involvement of the left in responsible national government. A year on, the coalition is strained, its policy failures apparent.

It has certainly lost the glow of popularity. According to a poll last weekend, the Prodi coalition would get 40 per cent of the popular vote if an election were held now, while the

Forza Italia neo-fascist coalition, led by the media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, would get 46 per cent. Worse than that, the Prodi government has lost its thread.

Its problem is that of all Italian governments since the fall of Benito Mussolini, perhaps since unification in 1869. It is the quality of the compact between nation-state and society. In this bottom-up country, where loyalties and legitimacies are so intensely local and regional, can the nation hold together without the lubrication of graft and hopelessly extravagant state pensions?

National governments everywhere have problems with the balance between the public's willingness to be taxed and its wish for spending—the disjunction in Britain on this score may yet do for New Labour. But in Italy the fiscal tension is chronic; it seems bound up with the nature of Italian nationality.

After 1945, the Italian state functioned as a machine for cash distribution, legal and illegal. Under Christian Democrats such as Aldo Moro and Giulio Andreotti, and Socialists such as Bettino Craxi, the state bought itself legitimacy, partly through the faded system of *Tangentopoli*—you scratch my back with expensively lacquered nails and I'll scratch yours—and by bribing an army of highly

unionised pensioners and beneficiaries, capable of rocking the government by strikes and demonstrations. This army has proved deeply reluctant to pay the taxes needed to keep the structure of payments intact: dodging taxes is a national pastime. In which other EU country does the treasury have its own dedicated police force?

National debt was built up to astronomical levels—the Italian government has long owed more than the entire national wealth of Italy. It is a nation of bond-holders and state beneficiaries; payments from the public account are its cement.

To say the Italian system does not work any more is too dramatic. Since the fall of the Christian Democrats, brought down by the weight of their corruption, many more hands are clean. Italy does not lack for courageous politicians and that special class of citizens above suspicion who are its investigating judges. Italy functions well enough in the cities and regions. The tensions are national. Regionalism's most radical expression, Umberto Bossi and the Lombard League, was itself created by Rome's financial disarray.

Resentment at the flow of public funds to Calabria and Sicily—where the fight against organised crime has a long, long way to go—focuses not on the recipients of aid but the channel through which it flows—Rome.

Italy's problem is simply put: it is nowhere near the equilibrium point in state income and expenditure. The gap is huge. Coolly calculated, real state outlays need to be cut by a quarter to establish a sustainable long-term balance between taxing, borrowing and spending.

The blunt answer, which only diplomatic nicety and banker discretion have prevented being said out loud in Frankfurt, Bonn or London, is that the size of the necessary Italian adjustment to meet the Maastricht conditions lies in the realm of political impossibility.

Maastricht requires the Italian budget deficit (just under 7 per cent of GDP at the end of last year) to be cut to 3 per cent by the middle of next year.

We're making the necessary changes, Prime Minister Romano Prodi said the other day, but *adagio*. But *adagio* won't do. The only tempo that would deliver the goods is *con fuoco*. That

means heavy and sustained spending cuts, eating into the muscle that keeps the Italian body politic together.

Such work of amputation is beyond Prodi, a Bologna university professor parachuted into the Roman bearpit at the head of a ramshackle grouping of parties last May. He was always going to be damned if he did and damned if he didn't. Dependent on votes from Rifondazione comunista, led by Fausto Bertinotti (reconstructed by name but unreconstructed by nature), Prodi last

In this bottom-up country, can the nation hold together without the lubrication of graft and hopelessly extravagant state pensions?

week cobbled together a spring package of odds and ends that did not do what everyone knows has to be done—engage with the structure of pensions and social spending. It merely nibbled. The Communists would tolerate no serious cuts in social spending: the ex-Communists (those in the Democratic Party of the Left) are none too keen on cuts either. In theory Prodi could have asked for votes from the Berlusconi crowd but that would probably merely have accelerated the government's fall.

Se ha coraggio tagli il Welfare—if only he'd the courage to cut the welfare state, said the opposition. A telling phrase that, *il Welfare*. Even to conceptualise their problem the Italians have had to reach for northern European words. The schoolmaster of Italian nationalism, Giuseppe Mazzini, once wrote haughtily about being instructed from abroad in political virtues. He would certainly be contemptuous of the way contemporary Italians somehow hope the European Union can somehow pull their financial chestnuts out of the fire. But the real problem may be Mazzini's—the national state created in his name seems fated to impotence.

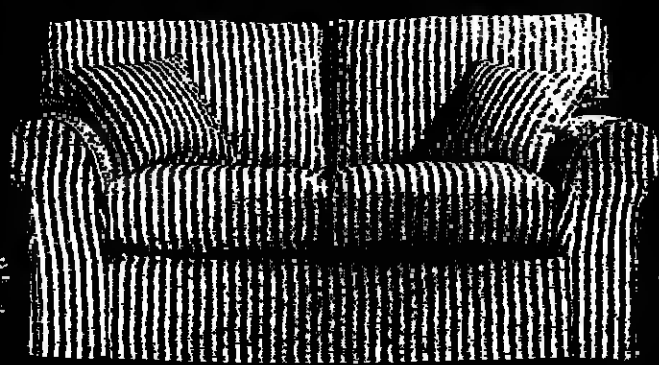
In *Europa*, a new novel by Tim Parks, a long-time resident in Italy, a group of Italian students accompany their teachers to Strasbourg to pray the powers of the European Parliament in aid of reforming their country's decrepit universities. What Rome cannot do, the EU just might. It is a touching faith, shared throughout the country.

What Parks captures is the exaggerated role "Europe" plays in contemporary Italian thinking. It's a sort of ideal self, a Real Presence, shimmering there beyond the Alps.

But neither an image nor the stuttering institutional reality of European Union will help. Nor should they. Whether Italy meets the Maastricht criteria is not really the issue—it won't. Italy's question is whether the country can ever be governed except as now: its political class constantly peering over the precipice into political and financial chaos but never quite falling off the ledge; its population unwilling to pay for big government but greedy for its benefits.

The best thing that could happen to Italy in the next couple of years would be ignominious failure to meet the Maastricht criteria. Some commentators have wrung their hands at that prospect, conjuring a fear that Italy might slide off into a Mediterranean sink. Would that be such a bad fate, if it led to political and institutional reconstruction (or Italy's breakup)? The other day Romano Prodi said Italy needs to "reconstruct its own identity and confront its internal problems in a new fashion." But when?

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jo brand's week

Poor old Moby the whale. Not only did it have to suffer the indignity of being given a name demystifying all the imagination of a 14-year-old O-level student, its last moments were graced with a stoning by children. This delightful aspect of childhood is easy to forget among media images of children cuddling rabbits in soap powder ads or squealing with delight as the family gets a cat from *Pet Rescue*. The film *Free Willy* has obviously passed this group of children by. This would explain a sign I saw in a wildlife park when I was in Australia last year. The sign read "Please Do Not Throw Stones At The Alligators". Ah, the joys of childhood.

How ironic that Nottingham has been attempting to attract more German tourists only to have a German family beaten up by a group of drunken youths—not so much a medieval experience as a wonder that one. I think this is the sort of behaviour which is indirectly encouraged by tabloids who constantly reinforce stereotypes of Europeans, particularly Germans, as pushy and cowardly power seeking. One wonders what

sort of people these youthful morons were. No doubt they had moved on from stoning animals to beating humans.

It's interesting how a lot of people link bad language with a general decline in standards. Radio Four listeners were outraged this week to hear Anna Ford (at 8.30 in the morning, mind you) describe a character from *The Archers* as a "shit". Many phoned in and many complained. The ridiculous thing is that most people swear, even if only once a day, as they are going about their lives—it is not just kids or teenagers experimenting with a few Anglo-Saxon oaths to wind up their elders. Actors swear, newsreaders swear and even vicars probably let the odd expletive slip from time to time. To see the radio and television lot allowing themselves to be held hostage by a handful of Home Counties types about what, after all, is a relatively harmless and, some would say, rather useful word used in relation to *The Archers*, seems anachronistic. Besides, you normally these people who don't like swearing are the same ones who would quite like to bring back



hanging, send black people "home" and castrate gays. I suppose, if I get any letters of complaint about this, at least they won't be telling me to f-k off.

I see that poor old Mark Radcliffe, who took over from Chris Evans at Radio One, has failed to stop listeners leaving the station in fairly large numbers. I think this is a real shame because, for me, the Mark Radcliffe Show which was on late at night was a breath of fresh air, with items one would not normally expect on that station, including poetry (horror of horrors), for example. It seems that Radio One listeners can only survive on a spurious drip-feed of showbiz gossip, bitchiness and schoolboy pranks. Given

the reign of the Spice Girls at the moment and the popularity of all things shallow, it seems sad that someone like Mark Radcliffe, who is knowledgeable about music and an interesting bloke, has to suffer the indignity of stanching the leakage of empty heads to prove his worth.

The glittering array of stars at the Oscars draped in something ridiculous by a famous designer fails miserably to reflect the life of your average working actor dragging him/herself around small provincial theatres. At any time, an enormous proportion of actors are out of work. When they are employed, they earn well below a decent wage. This is why Equity has been

struggling recently to rectify the situation and increase actors' basic pay and subsistence wages. Equity this week published a list of theatres and theatre companies in which they advise actors not to work for the time being. It is important to support this action fully, because the erosion of theatre infrastructure will leave us with a dearth of decent English actors and an increase in the hegemony of America. *The English Patient* starring Arnie Schwarzenegger and Jean Claude Van Damme? No thanks.

I would like to pay a brief tribute to my Uncle Les, a Shropshire farmer, who came up perhaps with the most eloquent anti-smoking argument I have heard for a long time. After Sunday dinner, the subject of smoking came up as smoke from the puffers drifted across to the non-puffers. "I have great admiration," said my Uncle Les, "for anyone who has the courage to indulge in a habit which involves committing suicide and murder at the same time." Bitney. And now I'm off to kill some people and myself. Anyone want a tag?

مكتبة من الأصيل

wicket ways

Cricket is a Zen activity; the whole point is that little happens

david aaronovitch



My cricket phase lasted about as long as my religious phase, though it happened several years later. The summer was warm, I hadn't much to do and Botham was at his zenith. I went to a match or two, decorated a house while listening to a Test series, and knew the names of the Middlesex team by heart. For that short period, the pleasures of this peculiar sport were somehow lent to me.

It didn't last. And, as I read about this week's gloomy editorial in the 134th edition of *Wisden's Cricketer's Almanack*, I found myself recalling why I fell out of love so rapidly. The editor, Matthew Engel, laments the decline of the game in England. "In England," he writes, "football has always been more popular than cricket. Ten years ago the gap was a narrow one. It is now a yawning chasm." Why? Partly, according to Engel, because of the decline of the national team, whose petulance and incompetence are making it hard for youngsters to associate with the sport.

But, he goes on, this is only part of the sad story. The true crisis is much wider: "The hunt fact is that cricket in the UK has become unattractive to the vast majority of the population. The game is widely perceived as elitist, exclusionist and dull."

He is quite right. The attempt at mitigation by Christopher Martin-Jenkins in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* (where elitism, exclusionism and dullness are all much admired) that "only on Wednesday night Lord Runcie said that there were more cricketers in Yorkshire than in Australia", merely makes Mr Engel's point.

It is surely not helping cricket that this country has not produced a truly great cricketer since Ian Botham. Such long, tedious intervals between short bursts of excitement reminds one of trench warfare and adolescent sex. A rational person would choose neither as a pastime. I think that the game itself is the problem. People find it dull as a spectator sport, because, compared with almost all alternatives, it is

exceptionally dull. In Nineties Britain, our declining leisure time can be filled with the Net, metal-detecting, American football, advanced cooking, extreme sports – and all of them offering completion in a fraction of what a cricket match requires. On a Saturday, most of us now expect to be able to watch one thing and accomplish two ourselves. We will not settle for less.

So is cricket doomed? Let me tell you a story. In the mid-Eighties, I was watching a match between Surrey and Warwickshire at the Oval. For five hours, I sat there, puzzled and strangely unsatisfied. Then I worked out why – I couldn't see where the ball was. Ever. In soccer, you can always see the ball, and it helps.

A cricketer friend of mine felt, however, that this ball-blindness was not a problem. "It doesn't matter," he said. "It's all in the action. The bowler's speed and arm movement tell you where the ball is likely to be going. The reaction of the batsman allows you to deduce how well he has met the challenge. You can still work out whether a good shot was played or a good ball bowled."

"In that case," I replied, "why not do without the ball altogether? Especially since it is both hard and dangerous. The umpire can judge where the ball should have been, whether it was hit and how well it was fielded." My friend demurred on the grounds that the physical ball was still useful in deciding what had actually happened should there be any dispute.

But this exchange points to an important truth about cricket, which the sport's desire to compete with others may have obscured. It is a Zen activity. The whole point – the beauty – is that little happens. To complain of its dullness is like moaning about the fact that not much happens during meditation. The mistake has been to market it as exciting. The answer is to take *Wisden* off the sports shelves and to make it the biggest attraction in the New Age and Personal Growth section. Chill out, Mr Engel!

'I can't help how my face looks'

Around the time Jeremy Paxman was interrogating Tony Blair on the proximity of his opinions to the breasts of Melinda Messenger, *Sun* readers were considering whom they would most like to chair a debate between the party leaders. Down at the Dog and Duck, not to mention in Acacia Avenue, the verdict was clear. Paxman, according to a readers' poll, was the man for the job.

But even if the debate had gone ahead the Paxmania expressed by *Sun* readers was nowhere apparent in the upper echelons of politics and broadcasting. "I read that I was considered an unsuitable host because I am, quote, too independent. Fine. I'd rather be damned for that than for being too compliant."

Nor, come election night, is Paxman destined for the starring role. Packed off to the count with Neil Kinnock in 1992, he will be back at base this time. "I shall be sitting in a little pen at the side of the studio," he says without rancour, but conveying nonetheless the faint impression that "little pens" are more suitable for cloned sheep than bullish interviewers.

"David Dimbleby presents it. It is part of the constitution of this country that all major events have to be presented by Dimbleby. You can quote me on that."

With Paxman what you see is what you get. He is charming, amusing, a good raconteur but suffused by the world-weariness with which he views politicians in general and the election preamble in particular. As a wind-up I suggest his questioning of Tony Blair, in his recent *Newnight* interviews with the three party leaders, might have been construed as slightly soft. Did that betoken a socialist sympathy?

"Hal!" he says, laughing most fearfully. "You're going to have to do better than that if you think I'm going to tell you what my politics are. You're going to have to do a whole lot better than that."

And what made him invite Blair to give his views on bare-breasted women? "Well, what is it like to appear next to all these nodes? I just thought it would be fun."

But Paxman had sounded hugely disapproving of the Blair and Melinda alliance. "Nothing surprises me really about what politicians will do to get elected. But it is salutary occasionally to try to bring them up against their professed high-mindedness."

His view of the relationship of interviewer to politician has been likened to that of dog to lamp-post. His technique, predicated on the question "Why is that bastard lying to me?", evokes the languid, post-



Jeremy Paxman talks to Mary Riddell about sneering journalists, war reporting, depression, loss of faith and his search for purpose, in this excerpt from an interview in the 'New Statesman'

modern sceptic, in thrall to none.

Least of all to those at the BBC who have studied his tactics with occasional alarm and approbrium. Some time ago John Birt was reported to have upbraided him; and expressed his disapproval of "sneering interviewers".

Paxman has scarcely effected a penitent metamorphosis. "I hate the word sneering. I can't help how my face looks. One has to bear in mind that people have voted for even the most humble backbencher. No one has ever bloody voted for me. So sneering is not something I'm happy or comfortable about when people use it to describe me. Incredibly, scepticism maybe. But sneering I don't like."

"My relationship with Birt is a mystery. It's a non-relationship really. We don't really know each other."

Does Paxman see the high-profile journalist as noble truth-seeker in a grubby world? "Messianic? No. I did have that view, and I got completely overwrought. When I was reporting in Northern Ireland

in the Seventies, I remember coming back here to comfortable England and being really, really angry that people weren't paying more attention."

"Then I did a lot of wars – Nicaragua, El Salvador. People were dying for political beliefs, and that really consumed me. I got rather screwed up by it. Stressed and depressed."

A mild malaise, or something more serious? The pause is long enough to suggest the latter. "Look, I really don't want to talk about that, actually."

There is something else. Much later, I ask him about the Church of England, and though he dresses it up as an amusing anecdote – he admits to a crisis of faith. "I used to have very little time for it. I started going back to church eight or nine years ago. And then I'm afraid I just lost it. It struck me that I probably was an atheist, so I talked to my local vicar and said: 'Look, I don't think I'm coming back to church. I don't think there's anyone there.'"

"Do you know what he said?"

"This is very positive. Only the Church of England could come

up with that spectacularly worldly and undemanding approach. I love that about them."

And has he been back? "I go occasionally. About once a month. I still would like to believe. I really would."

Why? By Paxman standards, this is hardly a killer question, but he appears genuinely flummoxed. "Wow. Do you know, I've never thought why do I want to believe this? I suppose because I would like to think there was a purpose. And the experience of depression kind of convinced me there wasn't."

The notion of purpose-seeking does rather explain Paxman. His last book, *Friends in High Places* – a critique of the British establishment – posed the question of where the nation should look for a new vision, but found no answer. Paxman is still searching. "The problems of this country are so profound that they can't be solved simply by changing the elected government. The British share of world trade has declined, and there are still the same prejudices against doing something productive with your

life; the same unfashionability about genuine enterprise."

For all his impatience, Paxman is an odd sort of outsider. Both his background (public school, Cambridge) and his manner suggest sturdy establishment ties. He is offended when you suggest so.

"That's for others to judge. That's like saying Tony Blair can't be leader of the Labour Party. Look at Benn. Look at Attlee. I dislike class prejudice in reverse as much as I dislike it when it's expressed in the conventional way."

But to make him sound pompous is unfair. He is also self-deprecating, particularly so his unfulfilled ambition. "I would have loved to be able to write fiction. We all have our self-delusions. Bamber Gascoigne thought he was a writer who had to do a bit of televi-

sion. I think to some extent Melvyn [Bragg] thinks he's a writer rather than a media person."

I never did find out exactly what Paxman's politics are, although he did say at one stage: "I think people should vote, doo't you?" as if he wasn't entirely convinced.

It is in any case unlikely that he, so attuned to the ways of politicians, sees any party as offering the big answer. Who does he really admire? After we talked about religion, he mentioned the "priests and nuns working in townships in South Africa. They're so inspiring. And they're doing something so much more worthwhile than the completely superficial and temporal concerns we have in our trade."

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Let me tell you about being Scottish



Trevor Phillips

Forget about devolution – today's tribes are spread across the globe. The modern nationalist needs a satellite dish, not a state

I can no longer live a lie. I am coming out of the closet. I have shared my secret with my wife, and more importantly, with my children. But yesterday's absurd furore over Tony Blair's comments has provoked me to stand up and declare myself publicly. Yes, I am a Scot. As such, I claim the right to a say in the future of Scotland, especially when those who claim to speak for Scots and Scottish aspirations to nationhood have so comprehensively lost the plot.

Where my parents grew up, there are few families which were not the recipients, willing or unwilling, of the genes of the Scotsmen and Welshmen who ran the Empire. My great-grandmother, born a slave, probably had never heard of Scotland when she met the sea-captain who fathered her umpteenth child. It is no accident that the men in my family carry names like Ivor, Angus and Mac, and so many black people have names like MacDonald, Phillips and Stewart. I am, by genetic inheritance and by culture, a romantic nationalist. And the abuse of that precious inheritance by mere politicians makes my blood boil.

The Old Nat politicians – and they are to be found in all parties other than the Tories – are muddled and outdated. They are no longer sure whether it is history, geography or ethnicity that drives their claim for self-government. As a result, they still cannot answer the so-called "West Lothian Question" – why should Scottish and Welsh MPs at Westminster have the right to vote on English matters once they have their own parliaments?

Nor have they explained why devolution would leave their people better off. Professor Douglas McWilliams, in

his research for the City of London Corporation, reckons the flow of money out of London to be about £6bn each year. Scotland and Wales are major beneficiaries. Government sources say that both countries take more from the Exchequer than they give back. Does anyone imagine that the London government promised by both Labour and the Lib Dems would simply keep writing the cheques with a cheery flourish? Not on your nelly. And if they don't, will the right to levy 3p in the pound make up the resulting deficit? No way, Jose.

There is a simple and compelling argument for administrative devolution. It is that government closer to the people is better, more effective government. But, the problem for the Old Nats is that the same set of arguments applies to virtually every other part of the UK. Physically, you can draw a line around the Black Country or Cumbria just as convincingly as around Wales or Scotland. Cardiff, as a centre of population, is nearer to London than Newcastle. Within Europe, Scotland looks much the same as the North-West of England, seen from Brussels.

But the Old Nats want to go to international conferences and pose as statesmen. So they fall back on the historic tradition. One wing of that tradition is institutional – the law and education particularly. We know that Scottish law is different. But that difference has been eroded over time, and the encroachment of EU competence will erode it faster. Eventually, the unique legal framework of Scotland will principally be a matter of archaic legal jargon. As far as education is concerned, it may only be a matter of time before England and Wales grasp that

the Scots system is so superior that it is adopted wholesale across the UK. The other wing of the historic tradition is what people now call "national identity". This constitutes the melange of cultural inheritance, speech, religion and just sheer tribalism, all traceable to an historic piece of land and water. The trouble for the Old Nats is that this justification for their ambitions is also on its way out.

To start with, Scotland and Wales are just as susceptible to globalisation as anywhere else. They have abandoned the kilt for Levis and their children turn up their noses at baggies when presented with a McDonald's. Second, they are divided: too many people in the northern half of Scotland dislike Edinburgh as heartily as they do London, and distrust it more. The same is true of north Wales and Cardiff. Third, Scottishness and Welshness are increasingly spread outside the traditional borders; if Labour wins, its three most dominant figures – Blair, Brown, Cook – will all be Scots. And, fourth, the Old Nats' conception of devolution offers no promise to those outside the borders of Scotland and Wales who feel themselves to be part of those nations. Do we get postal votes in the elections, or is this a property-based franchise, in which second-home owners have rights not available to people who can trace their ancestry back two centuries?

To make matters worse for Old Nats caught up in the romantic tradition, there are stronger claimants to an undiluted historic tradition in modern Britain. Two million dedicated British Muslims are dedicated to ask why it is that they can expect, at best, one Muslim in the new Parliament, while a sim-

ilar number of people who happen to live in Wales – but many of whom can't claim a Welsh heritage – can demand 30 members of Parliament, a government of their own and a £3bn subsidy. If the response is that the coincidence of population and geography is the key, the Old Nats are missing what is going on in the world. I know from my own experience that nationhood transcends geography – a lesson that Irish and Jewish nationalists have exploited brilliantly for most of this century; arguably, their greatest achievements have not been the establishment of Jewish or Irish states, but the creation of rich, vibrant and modern global tribes. Take also, for example, the success of East African Asians – built on the existence of a 150 million-strong diaspora that stretches across three continents, sharing common tastes, buying the same goods, watching the same films. In my own global tribe, it is no surprise to me that the top TV show among black South Africans (*New York Undercover*) is the same as that among African-Americans who can see it on satellite, yet the show is unknown to white audiences.

If the Tories lose, there will be devolution. But after the first flourish of ceremony, the real symbols of Scottishness and Welshness are likely to be found on cable or satellite TV as they are in the talk shops of Cardiff or Edinburgh, doomed to be starved of cash by Whitehall, and destined to be overruled by Westminster and Brussels. The truth is that the modern nationalist doesn't need another stuffy debating chamber. A modern, a PC and a satellite dish will do nicely, thank you.

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Animal WRONGS



They would never have survived another night in the open.

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THE BLUE CROSS

business & city

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BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

GEC may get round French 'non' to bid

Patrick Toohar
London
John Lichfield
Paris

The French government yesterday vetoed for reasons of "national security" a takeover bid by GEC for Thomson-CSF, the defence electronics division of the state-owned electronics group, Thomson SA.

But the hugely convoluted privatisation process took yet another twist when the British company later revealed it was in talks with Alcatel Alsthom and Lagardère, the two giants of the French military-industrial complex, which have been allowed to proceed with their rival bids for Thomson-CSF.

In a statement GEC said that while it regretted the decision to reject its preliminary bid for Thomson-CSF, it had "received encouragement from the French government to enter into discussions" with the two preferred French bidders.

"The process has already started," GEC continued.

Alcatel, the space and telecommunications group bidding in conjunction with French plane maker Dassault, confirmed it was in contact with GEC, though Lagardère declined to comment.

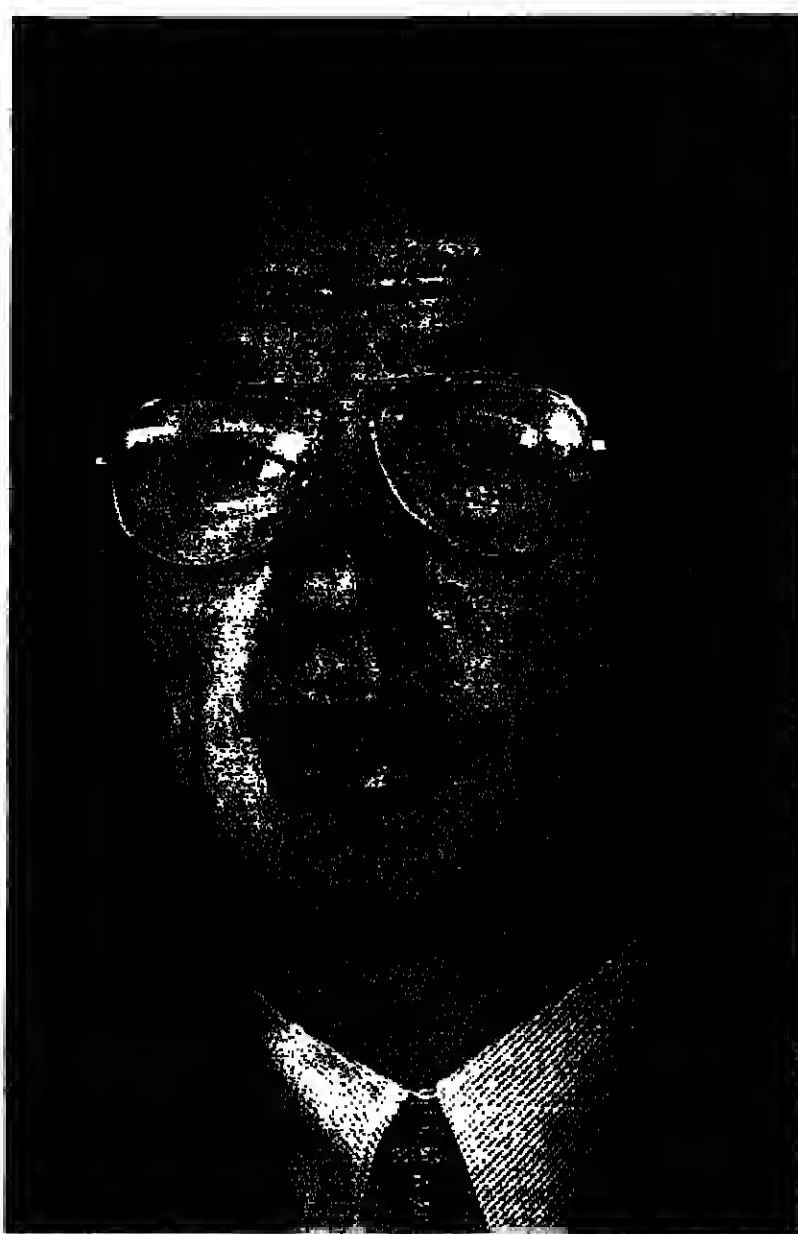
Although widely expected, the refusal to allow GEC to go

on to the final stage of bidding on its own was a public embarrassment for the French government, and Finance Minister Jean Arthuis, who is campaigning for a stronger "European defence identity".

It is the second time in four months it has turned down a potential foreign buyer for a part of the Thomson group. France was accused of discriminating against foreigners when it blocked plans by Lagardère to sell on Thomson's consumer electronics division to Daewoo Electronics of Korea after an outcry from French workers, industrialists and opposition politicians.

"The ceding of more than 50 per cent of Thomson-CSF capital to a foreign company would be contrary to vital national security interests," the French finance ministry said, admitting, for the first time, that GEC, led by George Simpson, managing director, had made a bid.

But the ministry went on to encourage the successful bidders to announce plans for partnerships and joint ventures with companies in other European countries. The French government hoped the Thomson sale would be the starting point for the restructuring of both the French and European military electronics industries.



Turned down: The bid from GEC's chief George Simpson (left) was vetoed by French Finance Minister Jean Arthuis on the grounds of national security

GEC's move has been interpreted in France not as a real bid but as a dramatic means of expressing the British company's interest in such future deals and as a statement of concern that the European industry should not be reconstructed mostly as a series of national champions.

Lord Prior, GEC's chairman, stressed the need to bring together GEC-Marconi and Thomson-CSF to create a world leader in defence electronics following recent consolidation in the US defence industry.

"The fragmented structure of the European defence elec-

tronics industry will not sustain a strong competitive position in world markets in the next century," he said. "This can be achieved only through an integrated electronics defence capability efficient in its operations and effective in the deployment of its resources."

GEC already has large shared interests with Thomson-CSF in the development of sonars and radars and has joint ventures with both the successful first-stage bidders.

British Aerospace, GEC's great rival, yesterday indicated its continued support for

Lagardère, with whom BAe has a larger joint venture in missiles, in its bid for Thomson-CSF.

A final decision on who takes the 58.2 per cent of Thomson-CSF shares owned by the government, valued at £1.3bn, must be made by 7 May.

Comment, page 23

US jobs figures renew Wall St jitters

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

A further fall in US unemployment last month, and fresh hints of inflationary wage pressure, gave Wall Street yet another bout of jitters yesterday that the Federal Reserve will be forced to raise interest rates again when it meets next month.

After the Labor Department reported a 0.1 per cent drop in the jobs rate to 5.2 per cent in March, the post-Easter week was ending in the same nervous mood it had begun for the financial markets, amid gyrating prices and debate over whether the 8 per cent decline in the Dow since its peak last month was a correction, or a signal that a bear market had begun.

After an initial plunge of 70 points the Dow briefly struggled back into positive territory, before lurching back to a loss of over 20 points by mid-session. In the bond market, the benchmark 30-year treasury bond moved lower, losing 21/32 points after two hours of trading. Its yield, which moves in the opposite direction, was up from 7.07 to 7.12 per cent.

For analysts the unemployment figures sent two contrasting messages. The overall drop was exactly as expected and the number of new non-farm jobs created, at 175,000, actually lower than predicted. But in a market searching for bad news, the focus was on a 5 cent rise in hourly earnings, after an identical rise in February.

Thus far a 4 per cent rise in wages over the last 12 months has translated into growth of 3 per cent or less in consumer prices. But the Fed is known to follow developments in hourly earnings when setting its interest rate policy, and a second consecutive small rise in short-term rates is reckoned at least an even-money bet when the Fed's Open Market Committee next meets on 20 May.

"It's not a frightening report," Robert Dederick of Northern Trust Company in Chicago said yesterday, "but it's not a relaxing one. It keeps us very much on our guard, and points to another Fed tightening in May." Adding to market nervousness, the Fed's vice-chairman, Alice Rivlin, said this week that the economy continued to grow strongly in the first quarter, after the revised 3.8 per cent GDP growth in the final quarter of 1996.

This is well above the 2.5 per cent expansion the Fed traditionally believes is the maximum that can be achieved without rekindling inflation - though yesterday the House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, declared that Congress would seek a target annual growth of 4 or 5 per cent from the Fed's chairman, Alan Greenspan.

The March jobless rate was the lowest for five months.

Caledonia pays £25m special dividend

John Willcock

Caledonia Investments, the financial group backed by the wealthy Caylor family, yesterday declared a 30p special dividend worth around £25m to shareholders, and brought forward its final dividend of 12.8p normally paid in August.

Observers in the City interpreted it as pre-empting any actions by a possible Labour Government to tighten up Inland Revenue rules on special dividends. The Cayzers are high profile supporters of the Tories, and Caledonia donates £50,000 a year to Conservative Party coffers.

Peter Buckley, chairman and chief executive of Caledonia, said the special dividend was a "once off" and had received clearance from the Inland Revenue.

"We're making the payment to reflect the growth in the value of our funds. Our balance sheet has grown by about 76 per cent over the last four and a half years, and if you add back all the goodwill we've written off on acquisitions that climbs to about 95 per cent."

Mr Buckley said the Revenue had agreed to the payment not least because Caledonia was announcing it just as it was going to pay a dividend, so that investors would not have been able to pile into the stock because of it.

Caledonia's shares fell 11p to 75.5p yesterday. Martin Cross, an analyst at UBS, said this was a good performance considering the 30p payment. "The shares are still trading at a 26 per cent discount if you add back all the goodwill and consider the conservative accounting policies."

Mexican snag halts rise of British-Borneo shares

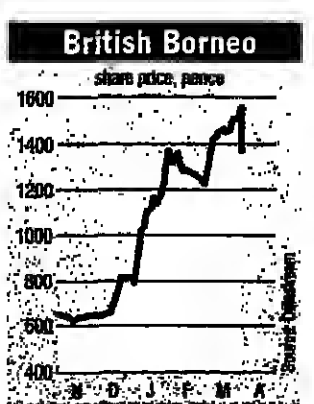
Magnus Grimmond

The rise and rise in the share price of British-Borneo Petroleum Syndicate was brought to an abrupt halt yesterday after the announcement of an uncommercial oil find in the Gulf of Mexico, source of some of the oil group's most successful recent oil investments.

The news that the exploration well drilled on the Green Canyon 37 prospect had produced oil which was too heavy to produce commercially is the first real bad news to hit the group during 18 months when the share price has multiplied more than seven times.

Having hit an all-time high of £15.42 only on Tuesday, the shares plunged 148.5p to £13.91 yesterday. The fall wiped almost £95m from the company's stock market value, taking it down to £887m.

But Alan Gaynor, chief executive, attempted to salvage something positive from the announcement. "We believe



the result of this well is very much anomalous for this region of the Gulf of Mexico."

Other wells within a few miles of Green Canyon 37 had shown oil reserves of much lighter oil. "Together with our partners, we will now be conducting a thorough review of the additional drilling opportunities in the area in the light of this result, before moving forward."

The review is expected to take around six months.

British-Borneo is the operator of the Green Canyon 37 block, where it owns a 40 per cent "working interest", alongside partners Kerr-McGee Corporation and the Consolidated Natural Gas Company.

The 14,430 foot well recovered oil samples at 8.6 degrees API, a measure of the liquid's thickness, which compares with 20 to 30 degrees on nearby finds.

One analyst said they would be lucky to get this oil out of the ground. "This is a huge surprise. There is not a big history of finding that weight of oil in the Gulf of Mexico. It's almost certainly going to be uncommercial."

NarWest Securities analyst Ian Reid said the well, drilled on one of a cluster of six blocks in the area, could have been worth 90p a share on British-Borneo's net asset value if it had helped prove up potential additional reserves put at 50m barrels.

The company said yesterday that, had the oil been commercial, those reserves would have been 100 million barrels.

Delta picks Rolls-Royce to power Boeing planes

Chris Godsmark

Rolls-Royce's expanding order book was given another strong boost yesterday with the announcement that Delta Airlines had become the first US carrier to select the British group's Trent engines to power future orders of the Boeing 777 long-range passenger jet.

Analysts estimated that if Delta, one of the world's largest airlines, decided to press ahead with possible orders for 10 of the 777-200 aircraft, each powered by two Trent 800 engines, it would value the agreement with Rolls-Royce at up to \$500m (£313m).

The news followed Delta's landmark announcement last month of orders with Boeing for more than 600 aircraft over the next 20 years. The carrier already has a long-standing partnership with Rolls-Royce, buying the older RB211 engine to power its Boeing 757 aircraft.

Though Rolls-Royce developed the Trent engine with the

777 in mind, until now it has received most orders to power the plane from far eastern carriers. Last year Emirates, the international airline of the United Arab Emirates, signed a deal to buy 28 Trent engines. Early this year Emirates also placed a \$500m order for further Trents to power 16 Airbus A330-300 aircraft.

The Delta agreement, which makes it the eighth carrier to combine Trent power technology with the 777, is likely to bolster Rolls-Royce's push to match the market share of its rival, Pratt & Whitney of the US. So far Pratt & Whitney has grabbed the lion's share of orders to power 777s with Rolls-Royce - on 32 per cent - ahead of the other main jet manufacturer, General Electric. The latest agreement means Rolls-Royce has almost 300 engine orders for the 777 alone.

News of the potential orders helped Rolls-Royce shares to gain 8p yesterday, closing at 245p. The shares were also

buoyed up by rumours of an imminent deal by the company to sell its Parsons steam turbine business to Siemens, the German electrical engineering giant. Rolls-Royce is already thought to have agreed to sell Parsons to Siemens for a price tag of around £30m.

Industry sources last night said the official sale announcement would not emerge until at least the end of this week. Negotiations between the two sides have dragged on much longer than expected, with unions at the plant pressing Rolls-Royce to say whether there will be any further job cuts before Parsons officially changes hands.

Doubts still hang over the future of another 400 staff at the Tyneside site, which is close to Siemens's brand new £1bn micro-chip plant.

Staff numbers at Parsons have already dropped by more than 400 since Rolls-Royce put the historic business up for sale last July.

Sainsbury dumps plans to enter gas and electricity market

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

The J Sainsbury supermarket group is understood to have unexpectedly abandoned plans to sell gas and electricity to its customers in the emerging competitive domestic market.

Sainsbury has ended detailed talks which began late last year with several regional electricity companies (RECs), aimed at forging partnerships in the newly established competitive gas market. Around 2 million

households are able to choose rival suppliers to British Gas in the south of England as part of on-going competition trials. So far almost 250,000 have switched to new gas companies.

The news of Sainsbury's change of mind over energy retailing is likely to stun and delight both its arch-rival, Tesco, along with the many independent gas supply companies which feared the big supermarket would squeeze them out of the market.

Industry sources said last

autumn that Sainsbury had sent out tender documents offering partnership discussions with several RECs which had been expanding into the gas market and had been holding face-to-face talks during January and February. The aim was to offer gas and electricity in stores across the UK, as the market moves to full domestic competition next year.

Last month the negotiations were broken off, with Sainsbury informing potential partners that it had decided not to proceed with gas retailing and, by implication, the sale of electricity. A spokeswoman for Sainsbury said: "We don't rule out any opportunities but at this stage we have no plans to enter the energy market. However things are still being considered - we never say never."

One source close to the talks said: "If Sainsbury were going to sell gas they would have done something by now ready for a full launch in September or October." The fact that they

appear to have got cold feet means the market is open for Tesco, though they are too good at keeping their intentions secret."

Although Tesco has been the only big supermarket chain to regularly attend monthly competition meetings organised by the gas watchdog, Ofgas, the store group's views on the energy market remain a mystery. A Tesco representative has been present at seminars held by Ofgas's Domestic Competition Focus Group, although

the company is thought to have been concerned about unfavourable press coverage of the first competition trial in the south-west last year, where some homes were mistakenly sent huge final bills from British Gas.

Another concern for the supermarket is the level of profit they can make from energy retailing. Although new suppliers are able to undercut British Gas by as much as 20 per cent because of lower gas purchase costs, the competitive advantage

with electricity competition, due to start from next April, is much smaller.

Other retailers have already entered the gas market, including Dixons, which recently did a deal with the independent gas company Amera Hest. Customers can sign up to receive gas from Amera from Currys stores at the same time as buying washing machines using the chain's staff. They will get discounts of 15-18 per cent with other schemes to fix prices or gain loyalty bonuses.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD %	YTD %
FTSE 100	4214.60	-22.00	-0.5	4444.30	4036.90	3.83			
FTSE 250	4904.60	-2.70	-0.1	4729.40	4469.40	3.56			
FTSE 350	2092.80	-8.90	-0.4	2194.30	2017.90	3.77			
FTSE SmallCap	2279.92	-4.61	-0.2	2374.20	2178.29	3.04			
FTSE All-Share	2056.07	-8.38	-0.4	2163.94	1989.78	3.71			
New York	8477.35	-39.68	-0.5	7085.18	5032.94	1.89			
Nikkei	16128.31	+22.01	+0.5	22995.90	17303.05	0.88			
Hong Kong	12025.17	-81.15	-0.7	13898.24	12055.17	3.43			
Frankfurt	3215.24	-66.67	-2.6	3460.84	2848.77	1.62			

Statistics as at 3.4.97

INTEREST RATES									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD %	YTD %
3 Month sterling	5.95	7.00	7.70	8.97	7.78	8.17			
UK medium gilt	5.64	6.25	6.87	8.29	7.08	6.65			
US long bond	0.53	0.75	2.18	1.83					
Germany	3.19	3.47	6.03	6.37	6.82				

CURRENCIES									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	YTD High	YTD Low	YTD %	YTD %
£/\$	1.6449	-0.0136	-0.82	1.6524	1.5242				
£/DM	1.6449	-0.0136	-0.82	1.6524	1.5242				
£/Yen	164.49	-13.6	-8.2	165.24	152.42				
\$/DM	1.6449	-0.0136	-0.82	1.6524	1.5242				
\$/Yen	164.49	-13.6	-8.2	165.24	152.42				

THE LONG WEEKEND

Planning too much for your pension? Companies are milking hundreds of millions of pounds from their shareholders in heavy charges. Find out how to stop it.

Guaranteed investment products are they as good as houses?

Preparing for building society pitfalls. All in today's Long Weekend section: pages 23-28.

UNIT TRUST PRICES

Today's full listing also appears in the Long Weekend, page 27.



JEREMY WARNER

A large number of those who think they are saving in an appropriate way for their old age are in for a rude awakening. Regulators need to do much more to curtail the industry's sharp and misleading selling practices.

Pension schemes rip-off is still alive and well

The insurance industry has done much to clean up its act since the pensions mis-selling scandal of the late 1980s and early 1990s, but as our front page story and personal finance pages show, the wider scandal of mis-sold pensions continues apace, and quite legitimately too.

There is an important distinction to be made here. We are not accusing the insurance industry of persisting with the sort of mis-selling practices that led to the present wave of compensation claims. In those cases, people were persuaded to opt out of perfectly good occupational schemes and buy private personal pensions when they would have done much better to stay put. If such practices were still continuing, that really would be a story.

But what our investigations do show is that for a very large number of people targeted by the industry - up to a third of personal pensions sold - these products continue to be a wholly inappropriate way of saving. In many of these cases the purchaser will actually end up losing money; they would have done better to have saved through a unit trust, ISIP, or even a conventional building society account - and that's even after the tax breaks allowed on contributions into a pension scheme.

The reason for this is that like most life assurance products, the up-front charges are so high that early contributions count for

nothing. The effect of this is to hit the very large number of people who for one reason or another are unable to keep up contributions for the lifetime of the product. Many of those who stop contributing after two years will lose money in the absence of very exceptional investment returns, and even some of those who persist with contributions for as long as five years will lose out.

In other words, personal pensions are a waste of money for up to a third of purchasers. What is more, in the case of "with-profits" pensions, the high penalties involved for those who fail to keep up with contributions are used to inflate the eventual returns promised in the literature to those who do.

Put another way, one class of pensioner is being ripped off to subsidise another, what it amounts to is a kind of well-meaning Ponzi scheme.

The wider conclusion is to be drawn from all this is an obvious and oft-stated one - that personal pensions as presently constituted offer only a very limited solution to the growing problem of how to pay for retirement. A large number of those who think they are saving in an appropriate way for their old age are in for a rude awakening. Regulators need to do much more to curtail the industry's sharp and misleading selling practices. It's no good saying but it's all done in the small print. Investors need to be told, unambiguously, in the nature of a government

health warning on a packet of cigarettes. And there are big rewards for the first to come up with a fairer, low cost product.

France's "non" to GEC's bid for a majority stake in the defence electronics firm Thomson CSF was perhaps to be expected from a country which has yet to throw off its *de rigueur* past. The surprise is in the unashamedly brazen way in which it was done. For GEC hasn't been ruled out on a technicality, or because its bid is too low, or even because it threatened larger job cuts than its French rivals for the government-owned stake. No, GEC has been shut out because it is British. It's a decision that Charles de Gaulle could have been proud of, and lamentably, as far as the cause of European integration is concerned, France is probably within its rights in making it.

National defence is one of the few areas of commerce which is given a dispensation from the rules of the single market, which generally require all European member countries to be treated equally. Never mind that what France is doing is against the spirit of the European Union or Britain's new-found "special relationship" with France on defence matters. I thought that Britain and France were meant to be sharing military intelligence, strategy, technology and even equipment these days. Apparently only if France remains in the driving seat.

Pro-European though this newspaper is, it's enough far to make the blood boil and can only add grist to the mill of those who cynically claim that full European integration is just an impossible dream. Further evidence of this backward-looking and nationalistic approach to industrial issues is provided by news that Aérospatiale is preparing to oppose plans to turn Airbus into an independent limited company.

Aérospatiale wants things to remain broadly as they are, with Airbus just a consortium of nationally controlled European companies. Aérospatiale is also vetoing proposals to appoint headhunters to find senior Airbus executives regardless of nationality. Traditionally the chairman has always been German and the managing director French.

Still, we shouldn't be too negative and jingoistic about all this. The door is being left ajar to GEC which is being encouraged by French officials to seek alliances or even form a consortium with one of the two rival French bidders for Thomson. This is progress of sorts and perhaps the most GEC could realistically have hoped for. All the same, it's no substitute for the root and branch consolidation of the defence industry which is going on in the United States. It is to be hoped that France eventually comes to see the sense of cross border defence mergers, for the fragmented nature

of Europe's defence industry needs addressing as a matter of urgency. Regrettably, it's plainly going to take time.

Two swallows do not a summer make and the Serious Fraud Office's two notable successes in the courts this week won't of themselves redeem this beleaguered organisation. None the less, the SFO has shown skill and some cunning in bringing the dreadful Abbas Gokal to book over the BCCI collapse.

Everyone tends to forget that the BCCI affair was the world's largest fraud, but after an initial burst of saturation coverage plus some good old-fashioned Bank of England bashing, the press rather lost interest in the whole thing. The reason for this is a rather unsavoury one. Not to put too fine a point on it, it was because those involved in the fraud and affected by it were largely people with funny sounding foreign names that nobody had ever heard of.

Most of us had heard of Mr Gokal, however, for he was a flamboyant figure on the London and international scene. Quite where the SFO got the information it needed to haul him off a secret flight from Pakistan to the US while on a Frankfurt stopover is something of a mystery, but it was a master stroke none the less enabling one of the world's biggest thieves to be brought to justice.

SFO landmark successes may not silence critics

John Willcock

The much-derided Serious Fraud Office (SFO) won two landmark court cases this week, sending hoteller Robert Feld to jail for eight years and convicting Abbas Gokal in the world's biggest fraud case. But will this be enough to silence the SFO's legion of critics?

Ever since its founding in the 1980s as the agency to clean up big business frauds, the SFO has rocked from one failure to the next.

There were howls of outrage when Roger Levitt was convicted of fraud and sentenced to just 180 hours' community service. And there was even greater public disillusionment when Kevin and Ian Maxwell were acquitted after an eight-month trial that cost the taxpayer more than £20m.

There was no disguising the delight at the SFO's Elm Street offices this week following the double win. "It's been a great week for the SFO," declared Chris Dickson, case controller for the prosecution of Gokal for £1.2bn of fraud.

The SFO's line is that its future was already assured before this week's successes. They point to the Davy Report two years ago which was accepted by both the Government and the Opposition, which backed the SFO in its present form.

But then came Maxwell, and the old criticisms were aired once again. Was the SFO's structure, using teams of accountants, solicitors and police the right one? Was the evidence produced at trials too complicated for juries to understand? Were the SFO's special powers to require people to produce

documents and answer questions too draconian? Would it not be best to just accept that the SFO had failed, and merge into another body such as the Crown Prosecution Service or a new financial regulator?

George Staple, the litigation lawyer from Clifford Chance who retired this month as head of the SFO to make way for Rosalinde Wright (previously of the Securities and Futures Authority), admits that Maxwell was a big set-back. But he points out that the SFO has a duty to prosecute all cases of serious fraud where there is even a reasonable chance of success. He points to press criticism of the Crown Prosecution Service's failure to prosecute certain cases where the evidence is not water-tight.

Losing a case does not necessarily mean it was wrong to

bring it, he insists. He is delighted at the two successes this week, particularly in terms of the large numbers of victims involved. "But I think the SFO has already shown that it is prosecuting big cases. It's a very effective organisation."

The public's despair at the SFO's fumbling of previous cases like Maxwell, which led some fellow-investigators to dub it "the Serious Farce Office", is surprisingly at odds with perceptions inside many financial regulators.

One regulator commented yesterday: "Inside the regulatory system the SFO is seen as quite successful, and that this success is largely unsung. Obviously the Maxwell and Levitt cases were seen as unsuccessful. But I think on the whole George Staple deserves credit for what he has achieved."



In the hot seat: Rosalinde Wright is soon to head the SFO

IN BRIEF

Littlewoods sued over 'counterfeits'

Tommy Hilfiger, the leading US sportswear fashion business, filed a writ in London for damages and compensation against Littlewoods Warehouse, part of Littlewoods, Britain's largest private retail and leisure group. Tommy Hilfiger said it was taking legal action after Littlewoods Warehouse refused to give undertakings pertaining to the sale of counterfeit Tommy Hilfiger clothing. Littlewoods Home Shopping said it would not knowingly sell any counterfeit merchandise and was investigating a complaint by Tommy Hilfiger. It said it would not knowingly sell branded products that were not originals.

Break for the Border to raise £6m

Break for the Border Group, the music, theatre and restaurants business, announced a one-for-four rights issue of up to £6.58m new ordinary shares at 51p. It aims to raise £3m net of expenses, £1.3m to develop the Break for the Border restaurant and bar concept. £1.7m would be used to reduce debt. Charterhouse Tilney Securities has fully underwritten the issue. The company said it expected earnings per share for the year to March 1998 to be diluted. It added that earnings per share for the following year should be enhanced following a full year of trading from at least one new Break for the Border venue.

LucasVarity acquisition

LucasVarity, the global engine, aftermarket and aerospace group, said it had acquired the friction manufacturing business Remsa for its aftermarket division. Remsa's net asset value, excluding cash, was £19m at 31 March. It has operations in both Spain and the USA. Terms of the agreement were not disclosed.

John Lewis food sales soar

John Lewis Partnership said food sales were up 19 per cent in the week to 29 March compared with the same period last year. Department store sales rose 4.4 per cent on the same measure. Total sales in the week were up 11.7 per cent year on year. For the nine weeks to 29 March department store sales were up 8.3 per cent year on year, food sales were up 6.7 per cent and total sales were up 7.2 per cent.

Wiggins parks off in Lancaster

Lancaster City Council is to grant outline planning permission to the 22-acre Lancaster Business Park being developed by the Wiggins Group and Tye Ties Properties, part of Reg Vardy, according to Wiggins. The park has a gross development value of over £20m and will have up to 250,000 sq ft of built space. Whitbread is to build a 60-bed Travel Inn and a Beefeater restaurant on 2.16 acres of the park. Detailed negotiations are under way with prospective occupiers for a petrol filling station and office accommodation, Wiggins said.

BTP Chemicals buy approved

The Department of Trade and Industry approved the acquisition of Alpha Beta by BTP Chemicals and the takeover of Westbury Hotels by Chelsfield. The acquisitions of Harrison & Sons by De La Rue and of Radio Wyvern by GWR Group were also approved. The acquisitions of Firststeel Holdings by British Steel, and of Southampton Citybus by FirstBus also would not be referred to Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Lyons quits Abbey National

Alastair Lyons has resigned as managing director of Abbey National's insurance division. He is to become chief executive of another financial services provider. Charles Thner, deputy chief executive, will take over responsibilities for both the life division, based in Glasgow, and Bradford-based General Insurance operations, based in Bradford.

Lex Services 'satisfactory'

Lex Services said it was satisfied with its performance in the first quarter. Sir Trevor Chinn, chairman, told the annual meeting that all businesses had increased their profits and Hyundai's market share in the first quarter had exceeded 1 per cent.

German boost for EMU

Yvette Cooper

European finance ministers and central bankers are meeting in Noordwijk this weekend to discuss the future of the single currency after a quiet week for EMU speculation in the financial markets.

But it was nevertheless a significant week on the single currency front. Bruce Kasman of JP Morgan said: "This week may turn out to have been the week in which the wave of EMU pessimism crested."

German data on manufacturing orders and industrial production were surprisingly positive, reinforcing the view that German growth is bouncing back and that delay might be less likely after all. As a result our graph shows bond yields for Italy and Spain converging on Germany once more.

Chancellor Kohl's announcement that he will be standing for re-election caused little market response but analysts claimed it was extremely important.

Mr Kasman commented: "It takes one of the major risks out of the system."



Queensborough in the black after 13 years

Magnus Grimond

Queensborough Holdings, the leisure group in effect controlled by Kevin Leech, the biotechnology multi-millionaire, yesterday moved to dampen expectations that it was ready to bid for a restaurant chain as it announced its first dividend and profit for 13 years.

Speculation about a possible acquisition grew in February after the group appointed Michael Guthrie, the man behind the Guthrie's restaurant group, with a brief to build up a new "leisure dining" leg for the business.

But in the wake of the sale by Whitbread, Brightons' new owner, of its Pizza Piazza chain to management for £11.25m last month, Queensborough was yesterday suggesting that prices had got a little out of hand.

Philip Mason, who joined the group as chief executive in 1995 from Marina Developments, said they had been looking at other groups, but the price-earnings multiples had been too high.

"We are not prepared to pay heady price-earnings ratios. Anything around the 17 to 18 mark."

Mr Guthrie's brief is to add organic growth to Queensborough's existing mature businesses of caravan parks and day visitor attractions, building up its own brand and its own p/e, according to Mr Mason.

They were looking at the Italian food sector in a town centre format, with the typical restaurant size around 150 covers.

The model was Pizza Express, where the typical spend is £10 a head, rather than Pizzaland, where it is more like £6.

His comments came as Queensborough announced that pre-tax profits of £3.59m replaced losses of £996,000 in the year to January, thought to be the first time since the company went public in 1984 that it had been in the black.

A maiden dividend of 0.3p is being paid from earnings per share of 2.95p.

The results came after a year in which the group has transformed itself through over £45m of acquisitions. As well as 13 caravan parks

in the UK, which have turned it into the country's third-largest operator, the group now owns six day visitor attractions, including Cheddar Gorge and the Needles, and two caravan parks in France. Mr Mason said that after an increase in values in the UK, prices of parks were now much more attractive across the Channel, where the yields are similar.

Queensborough is expected to announce within the next week that it is buying another park in France from receivers.

Caravans chipped in operating profits of £2.6m last year, mostly from acquisitions during the year.

The visitor attractions added £1.75m, including £1m from Pleasurewood Hills, near Lowestoft, picked up a year ago, while the Hotel Burstin in Folkestone chipped in a maiden £1.3m.

Gearing of 80 per cent is expected to fall to 66 per cent by the year-end. Four directors increased their shareholdings in the group yesterday, with Mr Leech lifting his stake from 29.4 to 29.9 per cent.

Foreign Exchange Rates			
Country	Spot	1 month	3 months
US	1.6403	7.5	23.20
Canada	2.0018	6.1	19.02
Germany	2.9488	70.35	207.15
France	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Italy	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Spain	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Japan	1.6403	7.5	23.20
UK	1.6403	7.5	23.20
Switzerland	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Netherlands	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Belgium	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Denmark	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Australia	2.2538	222.21	675.84
New Zealand	2.2538	222.21	675.84
South Africa	2.2538	222.21	675.84
India	2.2538	222.21	675.84
Singapore	2.2538	222.21	675.84

Interest Rates			
UK	Germany	US	Japan
Base	6.00%	2.50%	5.75%
Prime	6.00%	4.50%	6.00%
Discount	5.50%	4.00%	5.50%
Overnight	5.50%	4.00%	5.50%
3 Month	5.50%	4.00%	5.50%
6 Month	5.50%	4.00%	5.50%
1 Year	5.50%	4.00%	5.50%

Life Financial Futures			
Contract	Settlement price	High/Low for day	Est/Conts
Long GRI	128.21	128.21	128.21
Short GRI	128.21	128.21	128.21
Long GRI	128.21	128.21	128.21
Short GRI	128.21	128.21	128.21

Industrial Metals			
Aluminum	Copper	Gold	Silver
1000	1000	1000	1000
1000	1000	1000	1000
1000	1000	1000	1000

Data Bank

Share spotlight



get, fell 65¢ to 218.5¢; it hit 218.5¢ in January.

British-Borneo tumbled 148.5¢ to 139.1¢ after revealing one of its Gulf of Mexico prospects had produced poor returns — "oil, in the words of one analyst, 'like tar'."

The group's meteoric ascent lifted the shares from 483¢ in the past year and from 103.5¢ over five years.

The only leading group to make progress was Enterprise Oil, up 4.5¢ to 62½ despite sell advice from the likes of Lyle and Dill.

Enterprise was the only stock to spend another day waiting and watching New York. The unpredictable non-farm payroll figures for once had little impact but the Dow Jones Average, during London opening, had another bumpy ride as sentiment was undermined by earnings downgrades for blue chip IBM.

After scoring a 33-points advance Footsie settled for a

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

22 gain to 4,236.6 in rather lacklustre trading.

BG, once British Gas, was the best-performing blue chip with a 6.5p gain to 173.5p. Its shares have blazed 15p this week on reports, first in the *Independent*, that the Monopolies and Mergers Commission may back the company rather than regulate Ofgas.

The MMC is due to report on the controversial Ofgas pricing proposals later this month.

The gas group was also drawn into the current euphoria for utilities as the threat of the proposed Labour wind-fall tax is submerged by suggestions it will not be too

National Power gained a further 9p to 505.5p and PowerGen 7.5p to 619p. Thames Water rose 10p to 676.5p and Yorkshire Water splashed 19p higher to 350p.

The Rolls-Royce engine deal with Delta Airlines and hopes it is near to selling its Paveco deal lifted the shares 8p to 245p. Bunnings, the buns to gums conglomerate, added 5p to 274p as SBC Warburg suggested a 316p target.

Sears, the struggling retailer, was again briskly traded with break-up bid stories still going the rounds. The shares put on 1.5p to 75.5p.

The latest twists and turns in the Thomson-CSF affair after lowered General Electric Co 4p to 382.5p.

Drew Scientific held another upbeat day, gaining 32p to 219.5p after touching 240p. The slowdown was prompted by cautious noises from stock broker Wise Speke. Drew has surged from 21p this year, prompting the company to reveal it is seeking to use its technology for heart disease.

Thomson-CSF found the market healthy, high-fives. Allied Thermal 16p to 76.5p. Allied even touched struggling Rheemcell, up 0.5p to 5.7.5p.

NFC, the old National Freight Corporation, had a bumpy ride, falling 7.5p to 153.5p, as an E2W and sell. In fact, the international trader, regained 11p to 262.5p as UBS turned positive.

Bickerton, a builder, arrived on AIM at 42p from a 40p placing. Tarch, an insurance group

also made its debut via an introduction, trading at 107.5p. A November stockbroker Raphael Zoon Hemsley placed shares at 100p. Oxford Technology, placed at 107p, ended at 95p.

Cemstone, the paint group, was again brushed by the arrival of the founder of Zenheim Exhibitions, Laurie Lewis who has a near 30 per cent interest. The shares rose to 68.5p and the warrants to 25p to 22.5p. At the start of the year the shares were 25p and the warrants stuck at 4.5p until last month.

Foodliner Properties resumed its another robust performance, up 8p to 50p. But SRG, as some grew tired of waiting for the long mooted deal, fell 7p to 57.5p.

Brewer Gibbs Mew frothed 4p higher to 250p on director buyings and Flying Doctors put in 17p to 272.5p following a positive statement.

J Eurotherm, the electronic equipment group, edged up 1/8 to 45 3/8 as talk of a takeover bid was being lined up. Engineer Siebe was the name in the rumor.

Since its boardroom headquarters last summer Eurotherm shares have performed poorly, largely on worries the strong pound is hurting profits. Siebe, off 7.5p to 396.5p, had to contend with a rating downgrade to sell from NatWest Securities.

Annalyst John Pearson said that the group was likely to struggle to meet management targets.

World Fluids, soon to be called Peterhead, had a difficult session, off 7p to 62.5p. The shares, suspended while the group took over crane and fork lift truck interests, returned to market on Thursday at the equivalent of 70p.

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je ROV

two-legged man. Martin O'Neil is likely to play Grayson, rather than Lawrence, at right wing.

Boro's quality and form should win them the first major trophy in their 121-year history, but only if they can match Leicester's heart. If not Leicester have, in Emile Heskey, their own matchwinner.

title
for fi

photograph: Allsport/Ben Radford

player who shines is not a top player. There are 22 players with some very good ones on both sides. He is possibly the outstanding player on paper but it doesn't always work out like that." Few, however, will be betting against him.

serious

DWLDW; Everton
banned for one match,

County
 ... Manchester ...
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 ... or Poom will ...
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Matches: Newcastle
and Ferdinand back
signed from Rennes
with months' injury.

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ton's O'Neill, Ben Williams
will play after return
from injury.

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IOC asked
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return from a series

IOC asked
take action
over women

Aston Villa v Everton

Last season: 1-0. **Last five League matches:** Aston Villa DWLD; Everton LDWL. Aston Villa will be without captain Townsend, who is banned for one match, and goalkeeper Borsch (hamstring). Everton may be without the injured Barry, Gerrard, Craig and Branch for Watson's first match as caretaker manager.

Derby County

Last season: 1-0. **Last five League matches:** Derby County DWLD; Ipswich LDWL. Derby County will be back but may be without captain and winger Poom who is injured. Derby County will have a home game against Ipswich on Saturday.

Newcastle United v Sunderland

Last season: No corresponding figure. **Last five League matches:** Newcastle WLWL; Sunderland LWLD. Newcastle may have Shearer and Le Tissier back in time. Sunderland give a debut in midfield to Johnston, signed from Penryn for £250,000 and Quinn could play some part after seventh months' injury.

Sheff Wed v Southampton

Last season: 1-0. **Last five League matches:** Sheff Wed DWLD; Southampton LDWL. Sheff Wed may have Le Tissier will play after move to on-loan midfielder O'Neill. Southampton may have Dodd and Lundevorn are both fit again.

Chelsea v Arsenal

Last season: 1-0. **Last five League matches:** Chelsea DWLW; Arsenal LWHL. Di Matteo, Wise, Sinclair and Hughes are all suspended for Chelsea. Anello will make his long-awaited debut for Arsenal. The 17-year-old French prodigy, signed from Paris St-Germain, has been thwarted by niggling injuries so far.

Nottingham Forest v Wimbledon

Last season: 1-0. **Last five League matches:** Nottingham Forest DWLW; Wimbledon LDWL. Nottingham Forest may have Walker, who is still doubtful with a hamstring injury. Wimbledon may have a standing in for Anderson and Campbell. Jimmy Jones returns after one month's injury.

Tomorrow: Liverpool v Coventry City

Last season: 0-0. **Last five League matches:** Liverpool DWLWL; Coventry LDWL. Liverpool's internationals have all come through midweek games unscathed. Coventry's ever-ready defender, Burrows, is set to return from a series of injuries. Roy Carroll is expected to return to the first team.

IOC asked
take action
over women

sport

150th GRAND NATIONAL: From Antonin to Wyld Hide, a punters' guide to the runners aiming to break the circuit at Aintree

The contenders' colours of distinction

**ANTONIN**

Showered with improvement three years ago, winning a string of valuable races, but it took a move to Ireland with his trainer to rekindle the class of '94. Looked back to his best when winning by a distance at Punchestown last time, and has scored at Cheltenham off a 9lb higher handicap mark than this. Has form on good ground, a leading jockey and a sure-footed approach to jumping which makes him the best bet in the race. Odds: 16-1

**BUCKBOARD BOUNCE**

To be ridden by Paul Carberry, whose father, Tommy, won on L'Escargot 22 years ago. A rider with a gift of conjuring improvement from almost every horse he sits on, Paul cosied 100-1 shot Three Brownies into sixth last year. He faces a harder task today as his mount was beaten on 33 lengths at Carlisle seven days ago, so victory today would see enough form books on bonfires up and down Britain to accelerate global warming. Odds: 25-1

**DON'T LIGHT UP**

Not the most appropriately named of today's runners, since possession of a betting slip naming Venetia Williams's chaser is one of the few decent excuses left for pulling out a flag. The only runner in this afternoon's race yet to see a racecourse this season, and you suspect his odds would be even longer if he had had the chance to blot his copybook any further. Odds-on to come to grief somewhere on the first circuit. Odds: 200-1

**FULL OF OATS**

Rounded off last season with three wins, but this campaign has proved more difficult with the soft ground which brings his stamina into play all but non-existent. The extended trip should allow him to gain a measure of respectability, and his third behind Fyer's Nap two runs ago looks rather better following the latter's success at Cheltenham. Should finish about 14th, if the bad mistake he drops into every other round fails to materialise. Odds: 66-1

**GO BALLISTIC**

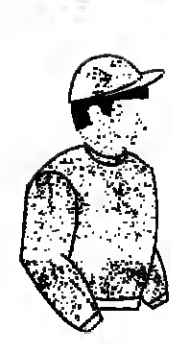
Ran far beyond expectations when fourth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, making him an apparent blot on the handicap here rather as Rough Quest, the 1996 Gold Cup runner-up, was 12 months ago. The presence of Master Oats at the head of the list has done him no favours, however, costing six of the 10ths he appeared to have in hand, and while he is generally a safe jumper, he tends to make at least one bad mistake per circuit. Odds: 10-1

**LORD GYLLENE**

A brilliant jumper, which, strangely, is not always the ideal requirement at Aintree, where the drop on the landing side can catch out horses who jump too big. Among the favourites after three victories in six outings, but has not won away from Uttwater and appeared jaded when folding tamely behind Seven Towers at that track last month. Success would not be the greatest surprise, but he is very poor value at the price. Odds: 10-1

**MASTER OATS**

Kim Bailey is running well behind Screaming Lord Sutch in popularity polls in many training centres thanks to his decision to declare the 1995 Gold Cup winner, thereby keeping the weights down and denying the chances of at least 20 other runners. Seventh when favourite two years ago, but form has deserted him and on his only outing in this term he was pulled up. The ground is too fast while he is simply too slow. Odds: 25-1

**NEW CO**

Santa Claus is supposed to leave things behind, but when he called on Mouse Morris's chaser last December, he seemed to remove his will to win. Things had been going well until then, with two wins at home in Ireland including one which netted £45,000, only for the second half of the year - and a hike in the weights - to usher in a series of disappointments. Would need to carry about two stone less to figure here. Odds: 40-1

**PLASTIC SPACEAGE**

Has lugged what must be the ugliest name on the turf around the girth tracks for all of 14 years now, to the point where the punters deserve a rest every bit as much as he does. Has not visited the winners' enclosure for four years, and even then it was at Newton Abbot, which barely counts. By far the oldest horse in the field, he has been feeling his age this week and his participation will remain in doubt until this morning. Odds: 150-1

**STRAIGHT TALK**

The mount of Joe Tizzard, who will become the youngest rider to set out in the race since Bruce Hobbs on Battleship in 1938. Hobbs returned victorious, but this partnership will do well to return together, since Straight Talk's last visit to the big fences saw him unsettle his rider. As against him: the last election-time National was won by Party Politics. This time, as cynics will point out, there could be no less appropriate winner. Odds: 66-1

**AVRO ANSON**

Has never won a handicap chase, which is not an obvious qualification for a potential National winner, but there are plenty of other indications that he will go close. Stamina is no problem - he passed the post first in the 1994 Stayers' Hurdle only to lose the race in the stewards' room - and his debut run this season, when third to Jodani at Haydock, was outstanding. Goes well fresh and has a good chance of a place in the frame. Odds: 10-1

**CAMELOT KNIGHT**

Named in honour of men who performed valiant deeds, which is a little unfortunate given that his finest moment - worth all of £2,980 - came in a Chesham handicap four years ago. Returned one of his best efforts since when sixth, beaten 30 lengths, in the Kim Muir at Cheltenham last month, but even a repeat performance would take him no further than the first two dozen home. Can be passed over without a second thought. Odds: 100-1

**BACK BAR**

Like a trident with a prong missing, Arthur Moore's three-strong team for this year's National includes two elements which could do some damage, and another which is utterly harmless. This one's the dud, with just three wins in 27 starts, and all of those back in his novice days, at two and a half miles or less. A very distant fourth on his most recent start, his main target today is to avoid finishing a very distant 40th. Odds: 100-1

**CELTIC ABBEY**

Has just two wins under Rules to his credit, fewer than any other runner in the field, and will not be playing catch-up today. Lost his prospective rider, amateur Dei Jones, on Tuesday when his application to ride in the race arrived at the Jockey Club too late, which prompts the conclusion that everything about him is slow. His jumping is rather hit-and-miss and at Aintree, of course, one miss is one too many. Odds: 100-1

**BELMONT KING**

Launched his season well after a spell troubled by injury with victory in the Rehearsal Chase at Cheltenham. As it turned out, the rehearsal turned into an opening night, and his two outings since have offered little encouragement that the name will be up in lights. Little impression on the average Cheltenham crowd at Chesham last month, and you would expect more glow in the green, but his relatively prominent position in the betting is a mystery. Odds: 22-1

**DAKYN'S BOY**

Hit the high point of his career in a valuable novice event at Kempton five years ago, since when it has been a steady free-wheel downhill. Unsettled his rider at the 10th two years ago, since when his form has declined further. Now very much one of life's also-rans, he was beaten 65 lengths at Chesham last month and was probably fortunate to get that close. Others demand to be considered, he demands to be ignored. Odds: 100-1

**EVANGELICA**

Not seen out since January, perhaps to allow her to recover from the shock of being beaten by a 100-1 shot. That says all you need to know about her chance today, which is most conveniently viewed with a powerful magnifying glass. The only mare in the field, but the last one to win was Nickel Coin back in 1951, and that statistic at least could not be any safer today if it was locked in the vaults of the Bank of England. Odds: 50-1

**GENERAL WOLFE**

Favourite when the weights were published in February, but did little to advertise his chance when tailed off behind Belmont King at Chesham last month. Tim Foster, his trainer, is a notorious pessimist, so the fact that he has discounted this contender's chance in almost up-beat fashion - allied to the fact that he has saddled three National winners - is encouraging. Needed the weights to rise and may just make a place in the frame. Odds: 18-1

**GRANGE BRAKE**

Quirky, very controllable, beast who seems to apply himself only when the odds are stacked against him. He would, for instance, probably have finished third in the Hennessy at Newbury last November - at odds of 100-1 - but for a last-fence mishap, and on that basis, he should go pretty well today. As trustworthy as a triple agent and is the sort of horse who would find a way to lose if he was 20 lengths clear round the elbow. Odds: 100-1

**LO STREGONE**

As rugged as a mountain bike, but with the gearbox of a Chopper, Tom Tate's runner goes from a walk to a steady gallop and does not get any faster. Soft ground is not, as some suppose, essential, but it does slow down his opponents. Third in the Hennessy at Newbury in November, but then dreadful behind Sun Bay at Haydock, and unlike 12 months ago, when he was a late absentee, he is now weighted up to his best form. Odds: 14-1

**MUGONI BEACH**

Does his winning on the summer circuit at tracks like Bangor and Newton Abbot, and is proof that the rules to ensure that National runners are of a reasonable standard are still too lax. Recorded his last win back in 1995 and provides a first outing in the race for Jamie Evans, a former champion over the sticks in his native Australia. It will not be long, however, before Evans sees Bondi beach as a far more appealing alternative. Odds: 100-1

**OVER THE STREAM**

Achieved the not inconsiderable feat on his latest outing of being beaten by 89 lengths - and by six other very limited opponents - in a minor event at Newcastle, which makes him a short price to be the last home horse. Beaten even further on his only other run this season, though he has got round safely on his two previous excursions here and can be expected to do so again today. Or, if not today, then some time tomorrow. Odds: 200-1

**SMITH'S BAND**

Both his trainer and jockey, Jenny Pitman and Richard Dunwoody, have won the National twice before, which is something no other runner can claim, but this one is unlikely to improve either record. Pulled up on his only outing this season, and while snippets of form hold out hopes of a place - when narrow runner-up at Haydock last year, for instance - it looks as if we will be spared the "Queen of Aintree" routine this time. Odds: 12-1

**VALIANT WARRIOR**

Yet another of the redoubtable ex-pats whose sole task is to make the field look respectable. An honest, hard-working creature who goes to past relying on mishaps to others - and a dozen of them at that - if he is to make it into the first six. Third to the useful Senior El Beudri at Newbury last time and has form on a fast surface, but could only be flying higher today. If he had checked in for the 3pm Concorde to New York. Odds: 50-1

**BISHOPS HALL**

One to back if your attention span is limited, since he has failed to get past the first fence in each of the last two years. Was landed in some quarters 12 months ago, when good going - which generally helps a lot - in his preferred surface, and ran off a 110 lower mark the following month. Doubts remain about his ability to see out the trip, so something up right until the second, before a ride-out finish, is as much as he can hope for. Odds: 50-1

**DEXTRA DONE**

A grey individual with practically no chance of winning, which should make him the obvious choice when the current occupant of No 10 is deciding where to stick his £1. A fortunate winner at Sandown in February when all others with a chance fell, but drew the wrong blank from that and has run badly since. May receive his first crack of the whip on the run to the first, and his unfortunate jockey faces an exhausting 10 minutes. Odds: 33-1

**FEATHERED GALLE**

The forgotten figure in the Irish team, but arguably has as much chance as any of the makers of taking the National across the water for the first time since 1975. Won the Irish National last year on good to firm ground, beating the former Gold Cup winner Jodani by eight lengths, and while he has yet to reproduce that form this season, he has not had either the ground conditions or the suitably extended trip to suit. Odds: 20-1

**GLEMOT**

A quarter of any prize-money he seems will be donated to a Sheffield children's hospital by his owner, but the likelihood is that the calculation will be to find 25 per cent of nothing, yet to win beyond 21 furlongs, and while some punters still insist that two-and-a-half miles can hack for one circuit and accelerate on the second, they do so from the gutter. Victory today would make a mockery of 100 years of genetic science. Odds: 50-1

**KILLASHIN**

Some horses are born to take centre stage, but most will never be more than faces in the chorus, and here we have a prime example. Five wins in 33 starts is more than many chasers achieve, but he is up against the bad boys now, and the form which carried him into third behind Seven Towers at Newcastle in February may just find him a place in the first 15 today. Stays forever, but sadly at little more than walking pace. Odds: 33-1

**MASTER BOSTON**

"Won" the John Hughes Trophy over the National fences on Thursday, but without his rider, who was disposed of at the second fence. Getting rid of almost 11 stone of Richard Guest lightened his burden but he still had a testing workout and crashed into some running rails as well. That makes his readiness for this, in the unlikely event that he makes the line-up, doubtful. Would have stood little chance even with an ideal preparation. Doubtful

**NANTHEN LAD**

A former top novice who appears to have lost his way, trained by Jenny Pitman and ridden by Jason Tiley. If the description sounds familiar, it is because it tallies exactly with that carried into the race by Royal Athlete, the winner at 40-1 two years ago, and that will guarantee him a measure of support. The trail of coincidence will surely go cold just before four o'clock, since he has showed little in four outings this season. Odds: 16-1

**PINK GIN**

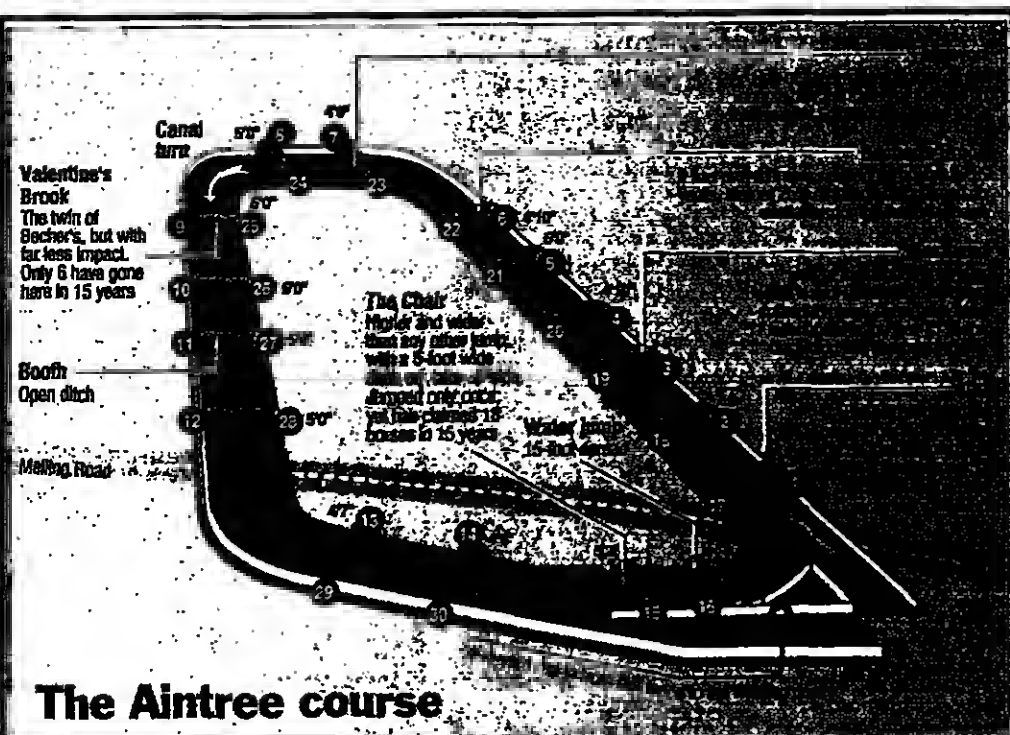
Double whiskey, more like, both for Chris Bonner, his unfortunate jockey, and anyone who has pulled him in the sweep. Shares with Spungron the dubious privilege of carrying fully two stone more than his true handicap weight, and while the same trainer and jockey managed to get Over The Deal into the frame at 100-1 a couple of years ago, this is another matter. He may win, but if he does, the Loch Ness Monster will finish second. Odds: 200-1

**SPUFFINGTON**

Such a confirmed member of the Slow Horses Club of Great Britain that he pays his subs by direct debit. Dour stayer whose last win came more than two years ago, he is utterly bereft of a change of pace and is required to carry two stone more than his true handicap weight. However, he is a safe enough jumper who should give Philip Hild a relatively trouble-free round about before he can get to the last fence before sunset. Odds: 150-1

**WYLD HIDE**

Just getting into the race when departing at the second Canal Turn 12 months ago, and has clearly been laid out for this year's renewal. Attracted a £20,000 cash bet a week ago - surely related to the fact that his owner is J. P. McManus, the biggest punter this side of Vegas - just before Charlie Swan was named as an encouraging jockey booking. Even McManus cannot control the elements, and lack of rain has not helped his chance. Odds: 10-1



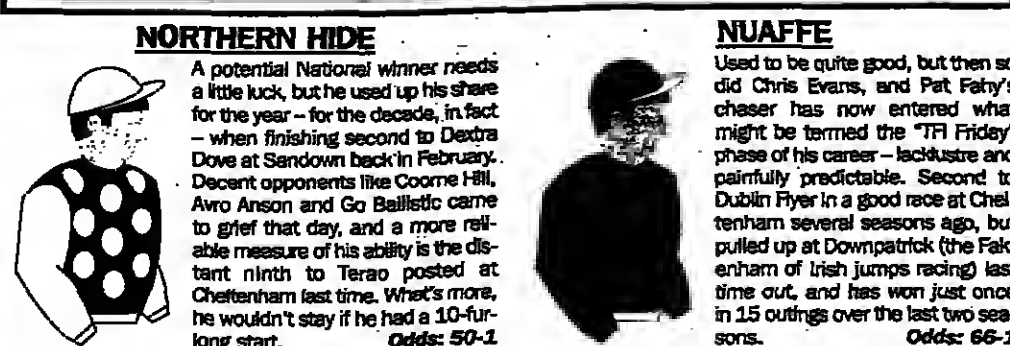
The Aintree course

20 YEARS OF FALLERS AND FAVOURITES									
Year	Winner	Favourite	Run	Fallouts	Fall	Run	Fallouts	Fall	Run
1996	Rough Quest (7-1)	Rough Quest (7-1) First	27	1	1	27	1	1	27
1995	Playful Attraction (40-1)	Master Oats (5-1) Seventh	35	2	2	35	2	2	35
1994	Millicent (15-1)	Monarch Boy (5-1) Third	36	3	3	36	3	3	36
1993	Vold race								
1992	Party Politics (14-1)	Docklands Express (15-2) Fourth	46	28	3	46	28	3	46
1991	Seagram (12-1)	Bonanza Boy (12-2) Fifth	40	27	8	40	27	8	40
1990	Mr Frisk (18-1)	Brown Windsor (7-1) Fourth	38	20	8	38	20	8	38
1989	Little Polka (28-1)	Duon House (7-1) First	40	14	11	2	15		
1988	Rhyme 'n' Reason (10-1)	Sacred Path (17-2) Fall	40	9	10	5	28		
1987	Maori Venture (28-1)	West Tip (5-1) Fourth	40	22	4	9	5		
1986	West Tip (15-2)	Mr Snuggly (13-2) Fourth	40	17	32	6	5		
1985	Last Suspect (50-1)	West Tip (13-2) Fall	40	11	14	3	22		
1984	Hallo Dandy (13-1)	Greasepaint (9-1) Second	40	23	10	3	4		
1983	Cortiere (13-1)	Ordnar (9-1) Fifth	41	30	12	6	11		
1982	Gallant (7-1)	Gallant (7-1) First	39	14	11	6	11		
1981	Aladdin (10-1)	Spartan Missile (2-1) Second	39	12	18	2	21		
1980	Ben Nevis (40-1)	Rubato (8-1) Fall	30	4	22	8	27		
1979	Rubato (25-1)	Alverton (13-2) Fall	24	3	14	8	27		
1978	Luckies (14-1)	Rag Trade (8-1) Pulled up	37	15	19	1	16		
1977	Red Rum (9-1)	Andy Pandey (15-2) Fall	42	11	39	1	17		



Becher's Brook

Fences 16 and 22



Northern Hide

A potential National winner needs a little luck, but he used up his share for the year - for the decade, in fact - when finishing second to Dextra Done at Sandown back in February. Decent opponents like Coorne Hill, Avro Anson and Go Ballistic came to grief that day, and a more reliable measure of his ability is the distant ninth to Terao posted at Cheltenham last time. What's more, he wouldn't stay if he had a 10-furlong start. Odds: 50-1

**RIVER MANDATE**

Will carry the Arde colours of Anne, Duchess of Westminster, but then you can get both Metros and Ferraris in red, and only one of them will do 0-60 in under three seconds. The only prize he can realistically pick up is for being the best-named horse in the field (by Mandatus out of Fyer's Choice), though admittedly his penultimate run, when third to Turning Trix at Newbury, does imply that he will do himself a small measure of justice. Odds: 50-1

**SUNY BAY**

Charlie Brooks, his trainer, says he would be standing for the Rehearsal Chase if it were not for the demands of his job, but thankfully for supporters of this grey, his devotion to lost causes remains political rather than professional. Carried home in the Greenalls' Trial and is still improving, so could be the handicap blot, but his dismal run when breaking a blood vessel last year is hard to dismiss, especially at these odds. Odds: 9-1

**NUAIFFE**

Used to be quite good, but then so did Chris Evans, and Pat Fyfe's chaser has now entered what might be termed the "If Friday" phase of his career - lacklustre and painfully predictable. Dublin Fyfe in a good race at Cheltenham several seasons ago, but pulled up at Downpatrick (the Falkenberg of Irish jumps racing) last time out, and has won just once in 15 outings over the last two seasons. Odds: 66-1

**SCRIBBLER**

In the long list of dreadful jumpers, somewhere between the one you thought was cool when you were 14 and the one you got last Christmas, sits this chaser, an unreliable conveyance at the best of times, but all the more so around what is still one of the most formidable circuits in the world. Bookmakers like to compile five-horse groups and offer odds on all five completing. Expect this one to figure prominently in most of them. Odds: 100-1

**TURNING TRIX**

Bought seven years ago by Mel Davies as a prospective National horse, and might yet prove to be one of the most prescient purchases in turf history. Lightly reared for a 10-year-old, he seems sure to appreciate today's step up in trip, although the outcast presence of Master Oats at the top of the weights has done him no favours. Should go well at a big price, even if a spot in the top four may be asking too much. Odds: 33-1

من الأصل

150th GRAND NATIONAL: Public opinion may swing behind Charlie Brooks' challenger who is fortified by life in the open air

Side with Sunny to breach the grey divide

RICHARD EDMONDSON
Racing Correspondent

Vital manoeuvres will take place in the nation's households this morning when porcelain pigs are smashed and coins retrieved from under the sofa cushions. The 150th Grand National is such an open contest that bookmakers are unable to nominate a clear favourite and will be guided by the loose change that will be shovelled across shop counters.

"It's impossible to say who will head the market this year," Mike Dillon, the Ladbrokes spokesman, said yesterday. "For once the race will be shaped not by professionals' money but by bets going on from the general public. It could be that the favourite will start at 10-1."

The annual conundrum of finding the first survivor in this gruelling assignment is made no easier by the fact that most of the form horses have shown their most persuasive displays on softish ground. Despite spluttering showers on Mersey-side yesterday the going is expected to be good.

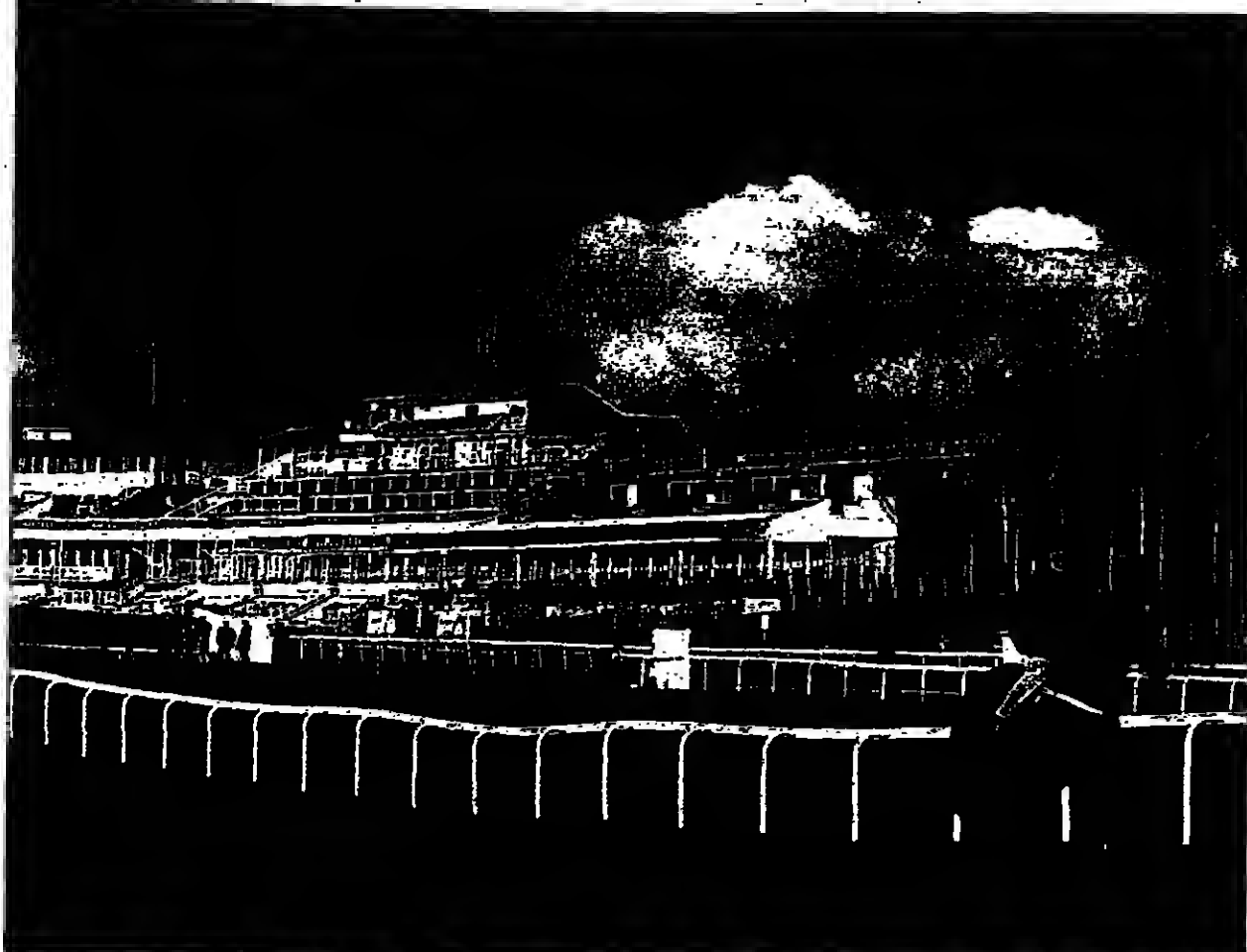
Lord Gyllene, at least, has won on terrain of that description. The nine-year-old has been favourite for much of the build-up largely due to his victory in the Midlands National Trial in February.

If you ignore the gelding's successes in his native New Zealand, Uttoxeter is the only place he has won. The men behind Lord Gyllene are particularly worried about the effect these frightening obstacles will have on their horse. "I hope he goes at it quietly," Steve Brookshaw, his trainer, said. "I would be happy if he got close to one early on and learned something. But he's a brainy horse, so I'm hopeful he'll get round."

He may, but the bats are likely to have stopped rolling on the ground by the time he crosses the line.

Wyldie Hide, too, was expected to complete 12 months ago until the Canal Turn removed those thoughts. The Irish horse has been backed quite monstrously, with one single betting-shop punter placing wagers that have cost him the thick end of £7,000 in tax. He could have placed the bets on course and had a good day out (helicopter, private box, champagne, private hospital care) on the tax saved.

Wyldie Hide would be a first



The stands that wait to serve: Aintree is almost deserted at dawn yesterday as a handful of early arrivals warm up for Grand National day action by taking to the track for a workout

Irish winner since L'Escarbot in 1975, and by oat connection that horse was trained by Dan Moore, father of today's trainer, Arthur. However, Wyldie Hide was also well supported last year and it may be that once again he will get left behind when the accelerators go down and make a damaging error.

Another Irish-based beast with a chance is Antonin, who ran right away from a capable field at Punchestown last time.

He had a scouting mission last year when survival was the sole priority, finishing eighth. A similar position appears likely on ground he will not appreciate.

Two of the classicist horses who can also ally good form to their capabilities are Go Ballistic and Avro Anson. These are jumping queries about the pair, but if they do not shiver under the challenge, a place in the frame beckons. Nathien Lad also has a bit of calibre about

him and has an added impetus in that he will be disappointing Jenny Fiman if he does not perform close to peak capacity.

Lo Stregone is another who has been a short price for some months now, though a caveat is that he ran as if he had a corkscrew tail and lived in a sty last time out behind Sunny Bay.

That winner is trained by Charlie Brooks, the Eton-educated Swampy who recently threatened to climb up a tree to stall the proposed Newbury bypass. There is leg trouble in the Brooks camp, but that belongs to the trainer himself, who is minus the cruciate ligaments in one knee. Sunny Bay's breaking is that he is prone to break blood vessels, though it is believed he has been helped over this debilitation by being turned out in the fresh air at a paddock for much of each day.

Sunny Bay's Haydock victory means he is in line for a record £280,000 pick-up for connec-

tions (which includes a bonus) should he prevail. The eight-year-old is another who is said to prefer sloppy going, though it must be considered that his best performance came last time out on good ground.

Of the many factors that are resurrected around Grand National time, one of the most grating seems to be that Nicolas Silver was the last grey to triumph in 1961. It now appears that fact is finally to be expunged from the record book by SUNNY BAY (nap 3/45).

However, most important of all to consider is the Latin inscription that is carried on the side of the Uplands horsebox - "dum spiro spero" - Brooks' prep school motto, which translates to "while I breathe I hope". At the end of this afternoon, the 30th anniversary of the celebrated méele of the Foinavon Grand National, the greatest wish will be that all 39 combatants are still hopping.

3.45 MARTELL GRAND NATIONAL HANDICAP CHASE (CLASS A) £250,000 added 4m 4f Penalty value £178,146

1	10P32-P	MASTER OATS (49) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
2	21-6P2P	NATHAN LAD (29) (Mrs Pearl Hemmings) M J Fiman 8.10.9	J Threlby
3	21-4-35	LD STREGONE (42) (B) (Mrs Style Chapp) C Brooks 8.10.3	A Osborne
4	17/51-51	SUNNY BAY (52) (Uplands Bloodstock) C Brooks 8.10.3	J Woods
5	15-2025	FEATHERED GALE (24) (M O'Connor) A L T Moore (M) 10.10.3	P Niven
6	21-25-30	AVRO ANSON (53) (The Mirror Punters Club) M Camacho 9.10.2	R Johnson
7	17/51-12	BELMONT KING (28) (Mrs Billie Bond) P Nicholls 9.10.1	P Carberry
8	52/10-P0	BUCKBOARD BOUNCE (7) (Robert Ogden) G Richards 11.10.1	D Bridgwater
9	01-241P	BISHOPS HALL (28) (T J Cannell) R Ainer 11.10.1	A Dobbins
10	23/11-12	LORD GYLLENE (42) (21) (B) (Stanley W Clarke) S Brookshaw 9.10.0	C F Swan
11	11/10-021	WYLDIE HIDE (24) (J P McManus) A L T Moore (M) 10.10.0	S O'Dwyer
12	5P/11-4P	DEXTRA DOVE (42) (Dextra Lighting Systems) S Bate 10.10.0	R Duwoody
13	30-1851	ANTONIN (48) (G R Bailey) M J Fiman 8.10.0	D J Casey
14	01-10-12	GO BALLISTIC (22) (Mrs S J Lockhart) J O'Shea 8.10.0	M A Fitzgerald
15	11/12-14	GENERAL WOLFE (28) (B) (Winning Line Racing Limited) T Foster 8.10.0	L Weyer
16	4-12-23	GLIMOT (113) (B) (Dennis Ward) K Bailey 9.10.0	S McNeill
17	11-25-53	WILLIAMS WARRIOR (24) (P Sellers) M Hammond 9.10.0	R Gentry
18	5P/34-4	KILLESN (22) (B) (H J Warren) H Mervin 11.10.0	C Gurnan
19	21-22-30	STRAIGHT TALK (25) (Mrs C A Peterson) P Nicholls 10.10.0	M J Tizzard
20	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
21	21-22-30	STRAIGHT TALK (25) (Mrs C A Peterson) P Nicholls 10.10.0	M J Tizzard
22	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
23	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
24	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
25	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
26	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
27	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
28	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
29	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
30	5P/34-4	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful

Minimum weight: 10st. True handicap weights: Lord Gyllene 9st 13lb, Wyldie Hide 9st 13lb, Dextra Dove 9st 13lb, Nathan Lad 9st 13lb, Sunny Bay 9st 13lb, Belmont King 9st 13lb, Buckboard Bounce 9st 13lb, Bishops Hall 9st 13lb, Williams Warrior 9st 13lb, Killesn 9st 13lb, Masters Boston 9st 13lb, Straight Talk 9st 13lb, Nuafte 9st 13lb, Northern Hide 9st 13lb, Turning Trick 9st 13lb, River Mandate 9st 13lb, Grange Brake 9st 13lb, Evangelica 9st 13lb, Back Bar 9st 13lb, Dalkyns Boy 9st 13lb, Scribble 9st 13lb, Celtic Abbey 9st 13lb, Full of Oats 9st 13lb, Camelot Knight 9st 13lb, Mugon Beach 9st 13lb, Plastic Spacings 9st 13lb, Over The Stream 9st 13lb, Don't Light Up 9st 13lb, Pink Gin 9st 13lb, Spuffington 9st 13lb.

SETTING: 9-4 Sunny Bay, 10-1 Avro Anson, Go Ballistic, Lord Gyllene, Wyldie Hide, 12-1 Smith's Band, 14-1 Lo Stregone, 16-1 Antonin, General Wolfe, Nathien Lad, 20-1 Feathered Gale, 22-1 Belmont King, 25-1 Buckboard Bounce, Master Oats, 33-1 Dextra Dove, Killesn, Turning Trick, 40-1 New Co, 50-1 Bishops Hall, Evangelica, Glomot, River Mandate, Northern Hide, Valiant Warrior, 66-1 Full of Oats, Nuafte, Straight Talk, 100-1 Back Bar, Camelot Knight, Celtic Abbey, Dalkyns Boy, Grange Brake, Mugon Beach, Scribble, 150-1 Plastic Spacings, Spuffington, 200-1 Don't Light Up, Over The Stream, Pink Gin.

1996: Rough Quest 10.10.7 M A Fitzgerald 7-1 (T Casey) 27 ran

FORM GUIDE

GO BALLISTIC, who ran the race of his life (so far) when staying on to finish 15th lengths fourth to Mr Mulligan in the Cheltenham Gold Cup (3m2f11yds, good) last time out, is well handicapped on that form, stays well, goes on this ground and, in Mick Fitzgerald, who won last year on Rough Quest, has a jockey who can hunt him back the back in the early stages and give him every chance to adapt to these unique fences. Sunny Bay, the 19 lengths winner of Greenlands National Trial at Haydock (3m4f, good) on his latest outing - with Lo Stregone - is disappointing 40 lengths last of five - is also well handicapped. But he is best on soft ground and it could be a mistake to make light of his history of injury problems. Smith's Band, second to Scotland Banks in the Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock (3m, good to soft) last year, was not given a hard time when pulled up at Newbury (3m, good to soft) on his reappearance and is another who could be leniently treated. Avro Anson, who won the 1995 Gold Cup at Cheltenham (3m2f11yds, soft) and was second to Imperial Call in the Hennessy Gold Cup at Leopardstown (3m, soft) last year, was pulled up on his only run this season behind Antonin at Punchestown and may be past his best. Feathered Gale stays well, wins this ground and was a creditable short-head second to Royal Mountbrowne at Leopardstown (2m5f, good to soft) on his seasonal debut. He appeals as the best of the outsiders. Bishops Hall has departed at a big price. Killesn won the 1996 Elder Chase at Newcastle (4m1f, but was 12 lengths behind Lord Gyllene (13lb better off now) at Uttoxeter (4m2f) last time. Turning Trick, who won at Newcastle (3m, good to firm) in November and Newbury (3m, good to soft) last time out, beating Sister Stephanie by a head, has a harsh task with 16lb more than his true handicap weight.

Selection: GO BALLISTIC
Guide: Ian Davies

HYPERION

1.45 Secret Spring 2.20 Celibate 2.55 Mafte A Stand

3.45 AVRO ANSON (nap) 4.35 Nathien Lad (nb) 5.25 Zaffaroni Run

GOING: Good.

All two left-hand courses. Grand National chases in 2m2f and 2m4f with a run-in of about 500yds. Mafte A Stand and 4f fences, several with a steep drop on the landing side. Mafte A Stand is 1m2f round with conventional 'T' fences.

All courses are of the same type. Mafte A Stand is 1m2f round with conventional 'T' fences. Mafte A Stand is 1m2f round with conventional 'T' fences. Mafte A Stand is 1m2f round with conventional 'T' fences.

2.55 MARTELL ANTHEM HURDLE (CLASS A) £50,000 added 2m 4f

1	14-22-30	MASTERS BOSTON (2) (M K O'Brien) R Woodhouse 9.10.0	Doubtful
2	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
3	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
4	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
5	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
6	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
7	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
8	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
9	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson
10	11-11-11	LAME ACTION (2) (B) (P A Matthews) K Bailey 11.11.10	N Williamson

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Coca-Cola Cup final
Middlesbrough's foreign flair
against Leicester's battlers, page 26

sport

Tiger enters jungle
Andy Farrell on the golfer
making history, page 28

DAVIS CUP: Briton belies lack of experience and place in world rankings to keep home hopes alive

Richardson rallies for Britain

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS
reports from Crystal Palace

In one of the most compelling Davis Cup debuts imaginable, Andrew Richardson kept Britain's hopes of a return to the World Group alive yesterday by defeating Byron Black, Zimbabwe's No 1, 3-6, 6-4, 1-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Richardson, a towering 23-year-old left-hander from Lincolnshire, refused to give ground in a three-hour duel, levelling the tie 1-1. His team-mate, Jamie Delgado, had earlier lost in four sets to Black's younger brother, Wayne.

The best players in the house were sitting in the crowd - Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski, nursing injuries and supporting their Davis Cup deputies - and before the end of the afternoon they were roaring as loudly as the most vociferous member of the long-suffering BATS (British Association of Tennis Supporters).

Richardson, 6ft 7in but dwarfed by his opponent in terms of experience and ranking - Black, at No 46, is 220 places higher - helped cut down on the difference in professional stature by producing 22 aces.

Even more impressive, however, was the heart Richardson showed in refusing to be cowed by his opponent's superior play in the opening set. And when it came to a test of nerve in the final set, the Briton again showed courage. First to break, for 4-2, he did not allow his confidence to be shaken when Black broke back and then drew level at 4-4.

It was Black, serving to stay in the match at 4-5, who was the one to crack, if only because of his opponent's relentless pursuit of the points. The Zimbabwean managed to save two match points, but had no response to Richardson's grand finale of two spectacular forehand drives down the line.



Andrew Richardson hits a forehand during his victory over Byron Black at Crystal Palace yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

He began by showing the touch of a seasoned campaigner rather than an understudy about to start his first contest over the best of five sets. He broke in the opening game, after Black had double-faulted for 0-40, then swept into a 4-0 lead and had a break point for 5-0.

Although Black held serve on that occasion, and again in the seventh game, the general impression was that Delgado had the technique to wrong-foot his opponent as long he did not suffer a serious lapse.

The match began to fall apart for Delgado when he was serving at 3-4 in the second set. Having survived two double-faults, which put him down 0-40, he crafted a game point and had all the court in which to convert it after his opponent left the ball hanging high close to the net, begging to be volleyed away.

Delgado was unable to resist the temptation to rise to the occasion and slam-dunk a smash, à la Pete Sampras. The leap was fine, but Delgado belted the ball into the net - slam-plunk. "A bit of sun came through one of the windows," Delgado said. "But I should still have made it."

The mistake was costly. Black broke for 5-3, and served out the set on his third set point, diving a forehand to clip a sideline with the shot. "My momentum changed," Delgado said. He had two opportunities to break in the first game of the second set, but netted a service return on the first. He tamely netted a backhand to miss the second chance, although in this case an excuse might be made that he was startled at the manner of Black's mis-hit smash over baseline which had gifted him the opportunity.

In Monday's 20-page sports section

Ravanelli and Juninho at Wembley

Glenn Moore and Mike Rowbottom report from tomorrow's Coca-Cola Cup final as Middlesbrough's international superstars take on Leicester City

The Premiership returns

Comprehensive coverage of the weekend's major football matches, including reports from every Premiership game

That Was The Weekend That Was

Our alternative guide to the weekend football programme

Aintree aftermath



Richard Edmondson and Ken Jones report from the Grand National. Plus: the jockeys' verdicts on the big race

The Monday Interview

'I genuinely thought I needed a very long and quite possibly permanent break away from sailing. Now I understand that I was never really running away from the seas but merely preparing myself to come back'



Tracy Edwards, who made her name as skipper of the all-woman crew of Maiden in the 1990 Whitbread Round the World yacht race, tells Ian Stafford why she is returning to big-time ocean racing

Plus extensive coverage of a major weekend of sporting action, including: Chris Hewett on tomorrow's rugby union match of the weekend as Wasps take on Bath; John Roberts on Britain's Davis Cup Challenge; Andy Farrell in New Orleans at the last golf tournament before the US Masters; Greg Wood on sports betting; Sports Book of the Week

Every week in the Independent's Monday sports section: the best of British sports writing and photography

Armed police on duty at Grand National

Racing

RICHARD EDMONDSON AND GREG WOOD

If any animal rights activists arrive at Aintree today with intent to disrupt the Grand National they may consider the response to their threat a little severe.

Armed police officers carrying semi-automatic rifles will be highly visible for the first time at Liverpool following this week's terrorist activity on the motorways. The men with carbines will be among a police presence of 500, compared to

200 on the first two days of the meeting, supplementing the course's own protection staff. Security has also been heightened because of the arrival today of the Princess Royal, who will present the big-race trophy and unveil a bust of Peter O'Sullivan, the BBC commentator who completes 50 working Nationals this afternoon.

The easy cliché in racing has always been that the IRA are Irish and the Irish like racehorses, ergo there will be no disruption to activities on the turf. The police commander at Aintree, Superintendent Ian La-

timer, does not accept this and his officers are in place to combat trouble from either the animal rights splinter group, Action Against the Grand National, or those responsible for the motorway disruption on Thursday. "There is an extensive visible police operation and also covert operations," he said. "It is a high-profile presence: there are armed officers at all pedestrianised entrances and around the perimeter, but not on the main concourse. This is for public reassurance purposes. We have not had any specific threats from any organisations, but we have a

range of contingency plans to deal with any eventuality." There were no equine fatalities over the big fences yesterday, though the first obstacle over the mountains of spruce was hardly a great public relations exercise as four runners came to grief. Chippour's capsize appeared particularly gruesome, though his thrashing on the turf was caused by a leg trapped in the reins and he was swiftly released. There was no such unfortunate ending for Penny A Day, the favourite for a hurdle race, who was later put down after shattering a cannon bone.

The most serious among the injured in the jockeys' room was Jamie Osborne, who gave up his remaining rides after an organ-shaking fall from Bear Claw. He promised to be back to ride the National favourite, Sunny Bay. Another fancied runner, Wyde Hide, who runs in the colours of the high-rolling Irish punter J P McManus, will carry into the race the largest off-course cash bet on the National since betting shops were legalised almost 40 years ago. The wager - £25,000 each-way at odds of 20-1 - was placed in a London office of William Hill 11 days ago,

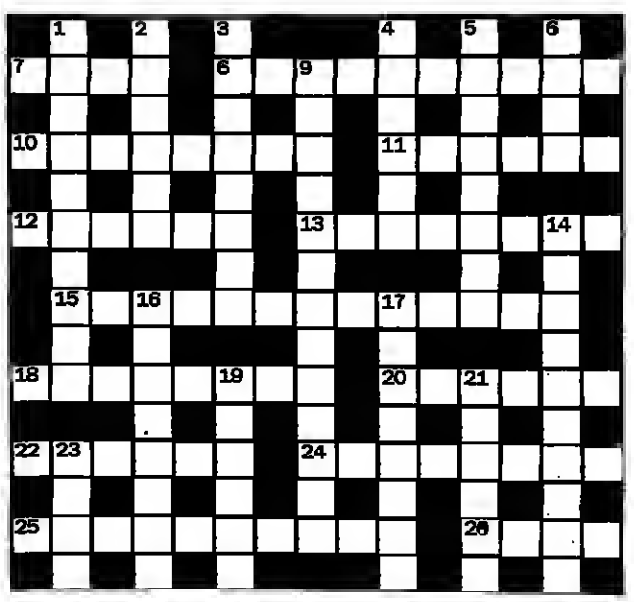
and if Wyde Hide is successful will return £555,000 to the fortunate backer, who may - or may not - be McManus himself. The total betting turnover on the race could approach £70m. The race is so open that any one of five or six runners could start favourite. "You could almost open a book on what will start favourite," a Hills spokesman, said yesterday. "If the public went mad for Jenny Pitman you could even go as far down as Nabthen Lad [currently 16-1] for market leader, but I suspect it will probably be Avro Anson."

Aintree guide, pages 29-31

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3265, Saturday 5 April

By Mass



Friday's solution
MAJESTIC DANGER
E U M O A M A E
D A N G E R O U S C O R N E R
O L I B E A
C A I R S T R O U D E R
I S N W U G
S Q U A D O O E S U S I E
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Y O U N G E R A N N E L L
E V A K E A I
N A I N T E S G O A T S P I N

ACROSS

- 7 Scorn endless provocation (4)
- 8 That's rash (10)
- 10 Bishop fixed nice fee for cleric's living (8)
- 11 Stick about to bend back in wind (6)
- 12 Hock's suitable for toast (6)
- 13 European's enclosed right bill for radio, say (8)
- 15 Wander with one after ebbing drift into low sea (13)
- 18 Radiant, short girl's boarded express (8)
- 20 Ramble twists round lake (6)
- 22 Root of disease getting mongrel's back (8)
- 24 Uniform for regular (8)
- 25 President has lines in banalities (10)
- 26 A Northern animal docked again (4)

DOWN

- 1 It may get broken if you step on it (5,5)
- 2 Day with wind down is a close one (6)
- 3 Bill I'd settled in US cash, as luck would have it (8)
- 4 Wife's amid rising fumes from cooking accessory (6)
- 5 Harvested a European fruit glut
- 6 Cut gets batter's fifth run (4)
- 9 Uninformed? Need reduced price index with revised details? (13)
- 14 Wanted to hold Victory Day, making wordy speeches? (4-6)
- 16 Agent for English branch installed in time (8)
- 17 Boy is pressurised by cunning felon (8)
- 19 A rising tax society shares (6)
- 21 Dessert has brown palm (6)
- 23 Feels strange, show fear without question (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday resolve hardbacked copies of the new Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, 20, Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: Mrs. J. Williams, Severnside, M. P. Williams, Bideford; P. Blackwell, Uckfield; P. Wadley, Woking; Miss S. Keen, Flackley, London N1.

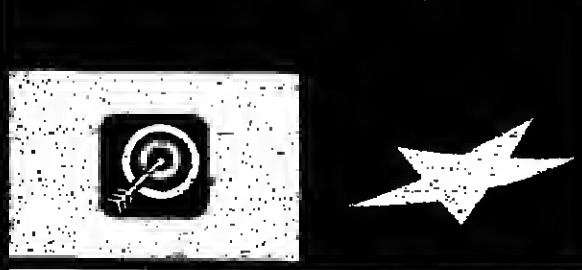
Wenger scornful of Ferguson plan

Football
GUY HODGSON

The Arsenal manager, Arsène Wenger, yesterday poured scorn on the request by his Manchester United counterpart, Alex Ferguson, for the season to be extended. "To speak of an extension to the season is ridiculous," Wenger said. "You cannot say your championship is serious and then extend the season. If the rest of Europe reads that we cannot finish our championship properly, they cannot take us seriously."

The problem is that the managers are not represented when these decisions are made by the Premier League. They cannot come to us in April and say it is not working out right. The problems have come, because nobody allowed for Manchester United going so far in the Champions' League when it was always a realistic possibility. "I believe the managers should have their say. The 20 club bosses should get together and be represented when the fixtures are scheduled."

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How many times have you arrived at the airport to find your journey isn't over? You're miles from the centre of town and you have to wait ages for a taxi. When you travel by Eurostar, you arrive in the heart of Paris or Brussels which, after all, is exactly where you want to get to.



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Calls charged at local rate. All calls are monitored for quality.

1250 من الأصل



IMAGE OF THE WEEK Cricket may be going through a sombre patch in this country but the game is played in its original carefree spirit around the world. Here, lads on a beach in Jamaica play on happily into the dusk. Perhaps their spirit of derring-do will be recaptured when the English season starts in 10 days. Photograph by Glynn Griffiths with a Canon EOS1, 80-200mm zoom. To order a print of this picture phone 0171-293 2534

the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 5 APRIL 1997

In 1996-97 the national team reached a point where even the good days were bad. They were one run short of victory in the Bulawayo Test and one wicket short at Auckland. It felt as though the English, who were once presumed to have won first prize in the lottery of life, were now on the receiving end of some cosmic practical joke.

At the 1996 World Cup, the England squad resembled a bad-tempered grandmother attending a teenage rave. Unable to comprehend what was happening – on the field or off it – the players just lingered, looking sullen as well as incompetent. They conveyed as bad an impression in Zimbabwe at the end of the year. And, though they appeared to have learned to display a little grace under pressure by the time they reached New Zealand in January 1997, that merely emphasised their earlier petulance. The captain, Mike Atherton, and coach, David Lloyd, were culpable in failing to understand the importance of their roles as public figures. But it was hardly surprising. Until the end of 1996, they were paid by the Test and County Cricket Board, a body that found public relations so difficult that for its last couple of years it simply gave up on the whole business.

The consistent failure of the England team is the biggest single cause of the crisis, but it is not the crisis itself. The blunt fact is that cricket in the UK has become unattractive to the overwhelming majority of the population. The game is widely perceived as elitist, exclusionist and dull.

Happily this is not the case with cricket around the world. 'Wisden' also carries reports on the exploits of the more unlikely cricket playing nations.

Afghanistan: The ravages of war have brought

WORDS OF THE WEEK

'The English squad resembled a bad tempered grandmother attending her first rave'

The new edition of the cricketer's Bible, 'Wisden', has harsh things to say about the state of the nation's game, but cheerful thoughts about the game abroad



cricket to Afghanistan. More than 1.5 million refugees fled to Pakistan through the Khyber Pass. A small percentage picked up an enthusiasm for cricket during their exile and took it home with them. In April 1996 eight teams played a 50-over softball cricket tournament with finals in the provincial capital, Jalalabad, using a tennis ball covered in plastic adhesive tape to reduce the bounce. A crowd of 200 watched the final. The game is played on dusty, uneven grounds, often with war-damaged buildings in the background. The dust is swept from the wicket, and the game has to start in the late afternoon because of the intense summer heat. Players wear traditional dress, with the umpires in black or dark brown.

China: The Peking Cricket Club began the 1996

season with a full complement of teams. The Beijing Chaoyang stadium became the club's new ground. That offers a vast improvement on the hazardous conditions at the Beijing Physical Institute: it has more grass than dust, it is more centrally located, it has facilities, and it provides shade for those wanting to sleep before they are called out to bat.

Colombia: Cricket is not endemic in the High Andes. Indeed, it is so alien to local culture that Colombian customs reputedly impounded a priceless shipment of bats and balls from Venezuela some years ago as "dangerous, possibly subversive material". Bogota is a challenge for the bowler. At 8,300 feet above sea level, anyone trying to bowl medium-fast soon runs out of puff,

and the ball will not swing much in the thin, dry air. The field is kikuyu grass: the ball will not skim the surface, and must be hit dangerously high to reach the boundary.

Ethiopia: Games are played on a football field in Addis Adaba which is composed of volcanic rock with a covering of soil and grass. The pitch is marked out by string, then the groundsman cuts it with his sickle, and the clippings are taken away to feed his donkey. Bigger rocks are pulled out by hand, but it is still imperative to use a soft ball.

Kiribati: Cricket in the republic – 33 fragmented and isolated South Pacific atolls that used to be the Gilbert Islands – dates back to the arrival of the British in 1892. The most dramatic event of recent years came when the Kiribati XI flew to play an away fixture against the Republic of Tuvalu. Batting second, Kiribati were down to the last pair and needed six to win off the last ball. Darkness was falling fast and pressure mounting – the plane for the return journey had to take off from a narrow strip of land, between the ocean and the lagoon, with no landing lights. The batsman on strike was a strapping player called 'Ipatulu, a man of fearsome strength renowned locally for having once been lost at sea in a canoe for three months. It was a good-length ball. 'Ipatulu took a step outside leg stump and, with the well-used "Len Hutton" team bat, dispatched the ball over cow-shot corner for six.

'Wisden' is published by John Wisden Co. Price £26, hardback and paperback.

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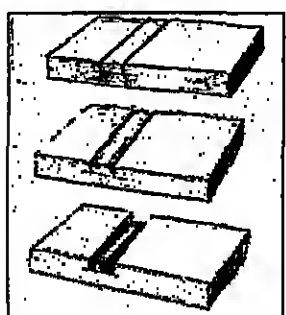
George Buchanan shows you how to do make an instant Jacobean box-stool

You've had your fair share of fun and games on this page: now for something grown-up and useful. The photograph shows a small oak box stool, probably Jacobean, with crudely carved decorations and arched ends, strapped in iron. I made it last week, and I thought some of you with a few tools, a little cash, a few hours and a restless desire to do something, might like to make a copy. So these are the instructions – it won't take long. All components, including ready-sawn oak, can be bought from the suppliers listed below.



1 Saw all the pieces to the right size and plane them flat. Even if your wood is as smooth as marble, plane it. This is no place for a machined finish.

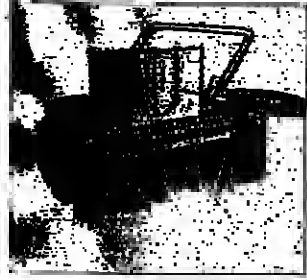
Mark the grooves in the ends, and scribe the depth of the groove with a marking gauge.



2 Saw down the edges of the grooves, in the order shown in the drawings, and chisel out the waste.

3 Draw the arches freehand, and cut them out with a coping saw, bow saw – or jig saw if you have one (see top of next column).

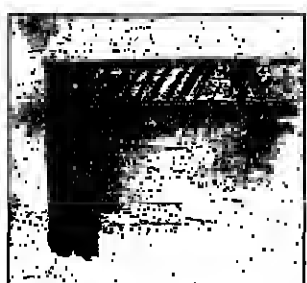
To see if everything fits, hold all the bits together with a big rubber band. If the bottom is too long, deepen the grooves; if it is too narrow, trim the ends with a plane. If it is too short, plane off the excess from the ends after the box is assembled.



4 The sides are glued, and held with six screws hidden beneath wooden pegs.

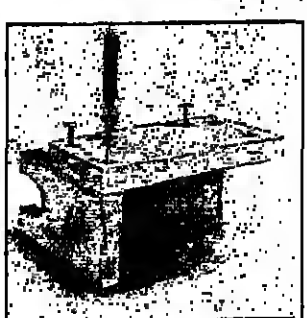
On each side plank, pencil in the screw holes. Start with a 10mm hole, 9mm deep at each spot, then follow right through with a 3mm drill.

Woodworker's glue is slippery, which makes it hard to hold bits without their slipping. So collect some nails and a light hammer and keep them handy. Run glue on to

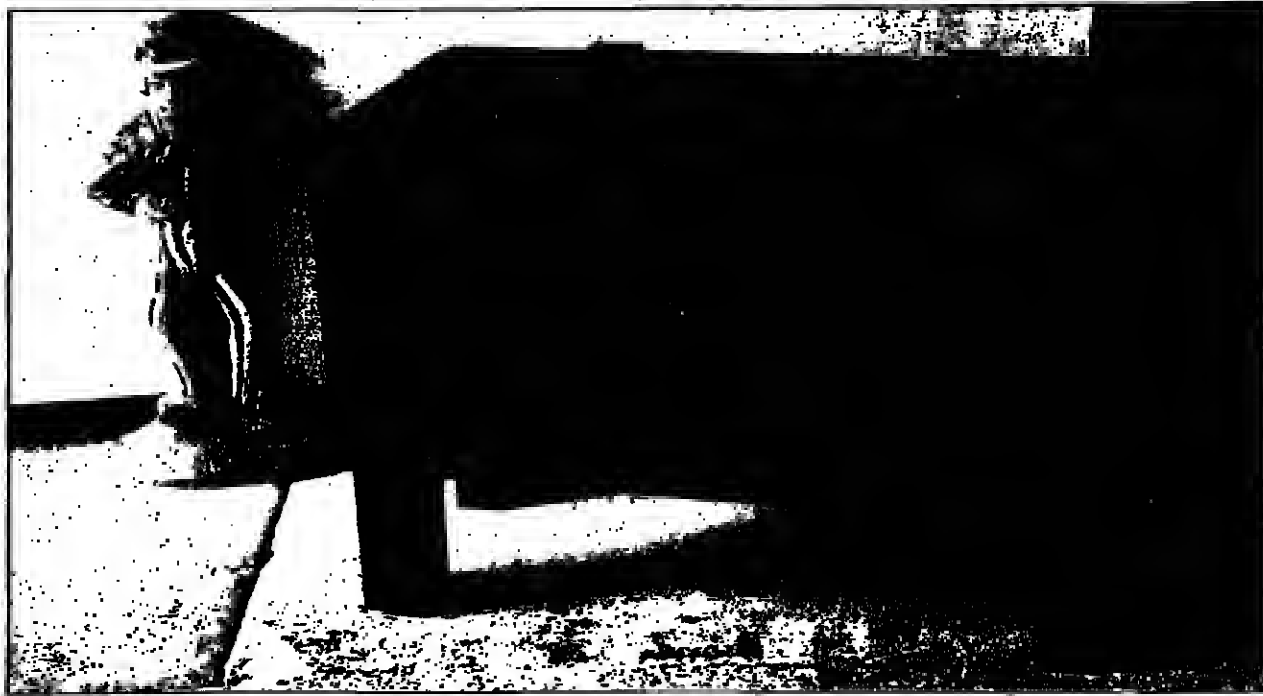


the side of one end, and on to the end and one side of the bottom. Slip the bottom into the groove (that arrangement is quite stable – what a relief!), and lift the side into place. Push a nail through each hole, and tack the side to the end. Press the bottom hard into the groove, and hold it with another nail.

5 Take the 3mm drill and bore a hole through the remaining screw hole into the bottom plank, going the full depth of the screw. Lodge a screw in the hole and wind it tight. Remove the nails one at a time and replace them with screws. Wash off excess glue



with warm water and a stiff brush, and dry with a rag. Your crude construction hardly resembles the little



An authentic Jacobean ketchup-stained box-stool, circa 1997

treasure captured in the photograph. Don't worry, just take one step at a time; it is nearly there.

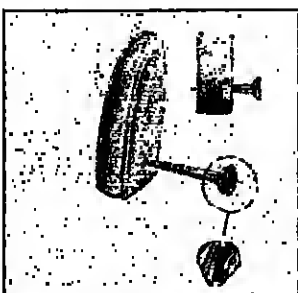
6 Use the offcuts from the arches for the pegs. Split them oversize with an axe or chisel, and trim them to a tight fit



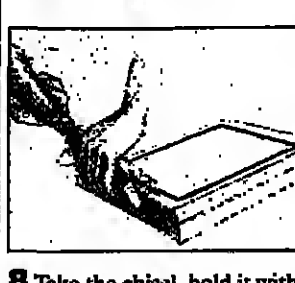
with the gouge. Squirt glue in each hole and hammer in the pegs.

When the glue is dry, cut off the pegs with a hacksaw blade. If you slip a card over the peg before you saw it, the blade won't score the sides of the box. Plane the ends and sides smooth.

Now, let's give the box shape and charm. Before starting, consider the carved mouldings. The precision of the carving is nothing like as important as their boldness. If you haven't done much woodwork I bet that you will carve the mouldings too timidly. Don't be diffident!



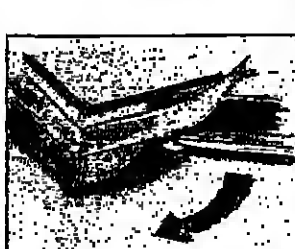
7 The tools to use are the screw-cutter, chisel and I/21, no 6 gouge. With a file, sharpen the screw-cutter to the point as illustrated, set it (by turning the screw), and draw it along the lines round the top and front until you have a deep groove.



8 Take the chisel, hold it with both hands, and slice off a 9mm chamfer round the outside of the front and top. Work along the grain before cutting the ends.

Arm yourself with the gouge. Powering with the right hand, and controlling with the left, sink it into the chamfer, and scoop it along. If the gouge digs in too deep, lower the handle. If that doesn't work, try in the opposite direction, or take smaller bites.

9 Cut across the grain first, then along it, angling the blade at each corner to give a mitre. If you have difficulty holding the top, screw a block underneath it, and clamp that in the vice.



10 Next, gouge a chamfer round the arches, and finish by removing sharp edges with a penknife or fine sandpaper. Now stand back and admire it: your box-stool is going to look a lot worse before it looks better!

Before it is waxed the oak is tinted the mottled greenish grey of neglected church coffers. Colouring is achieved with ammonia gas (easy to obtain dissolved in water from a chemist, or the cabinet maker's suppliers listed below), and mottling with tomato ketchup. Take care how you handle the former: read the label, and don't breathe the fumes! Take a kitchen rag loaded



with ketchup, and dab it thickly and unevenly over the box. Mottling on old furniture is quite subtle and fairly random. Copy an old piece of furniture if you need some ideas. Your poor sticky rag! Take it outside and seal it in a clear plastic bag. Cut a slit in the plastic, slip in a dish of ammonia, and close the slit with masking tape. Puff the bag about a bit to circulate the gas.

Leave the box in the foul fumes for an hour or two. Nothing seems to happen at first, then suddenly it changes.

When it is ready (don't leave it too long; it always finishes darker than you expect), don rubber gloves, draw a deep breath, squirt your eyes, and remove the box by Caesarean section. Wash the ketchup off with methyls and a scrubbing brush, and dry it.



11 Nail on the hinges and hook (pre-drill 1/4 of the way through the box before nailing), and fit the eye in the lid. This is made from a length of iron wire, bent like a staple. It is pushed through two holes in the lip of the box, and the ends are bent down and tapped back into two shallow holes. The loop on the underside is then twisted 90 degrees, which locks it in place. Take a fine brush and trickle a little dilute black



Indian ink onto the oak near the nails and straps, to simulate corrosion. Stir up a mixture of brown paint pigment (Brown Turkey Umber and Venetian Red) white woodworker's glue and a little water, and paint the metalwork a rusty brown. Paint a few additional marks on to the box, using the leftover paint with Mineral Black added to it. When the paint is dry, wax the box with a top quality brown wax, applied with a brush. Wax it every day for the next week.

12 And that's the box. I hope you like it, and I hope other people who weren't in on the struggle will be thrilled and impressed. Above all, I hope you enjoyed making it.

Tools: Two planes (a shoulder plane and a smoothing plane), a tenon saw, coping saw and hacksaw blade. Marking gauge, set square, chisel, gouge, screwdriver and hammer (and pliers to pull out the nails). Drills: 10mm, 3mm. Screws: 12 MS x 40 countersunk steel. PVA woodworker's glue. Three odd nails. Ammonia.

Essential addresses: English oak: Interesting Timbers, Hazel Farm, Compton Martin, Somerset. BS18 6LH (01761 463 356). Hinges, nails, hooks etc: MSY, Gigg Mill, Old Bristol Road, Nailsworth, Glas. GL6 0JP (01453 832707). Burnt Umber, Venetian Red, Mineral Black paint pigment, Supreme Antique Wax: Fiddes and Son, Cabinet Maker's Suppliers, Florence Works, Brindley Road, Cardiff, CF1 7LX (01222 340323). Chisels and gouges: Henry Taylor (Tools) Ltd, 6 Lowther Road, Sheffield, Yorkshire (0114 2340282).

Cutting list for seasoned English Oak: Metric: top (1) 330mm x 190mm x 18mm; sides (2) 210mm x 145mm x 25mm; front & back (2) 318 x 140 x 18mm; bottom (1) 283mm x 145mm x 18mm. Imperial: (1) 13" x 7.5" x 7.5"; (2) 8.25" x 5.75" x 1"; (2) 12.5" x 5.5" x 7.5" (1) 11.25" x 5.75" x 7.5".

Games people play

Chess, tennis and washing up at bedtime, with Pandora Melly

Duncan Minshull, 36, Editor of Radio 4's 'Book at Bedtime'

I have a theory about men and games. If you ask them about their favourite pastime, most will say "chess and tennis". I think it is because men like strategy. Chess is making strategic moves using your head, tennis is the same thing but physical: where you run; how you move your feet. This could be baloney, but it seems to make sense and a lot of writers talk about it – Julian Barnes and Salman Rushdie, for instance.

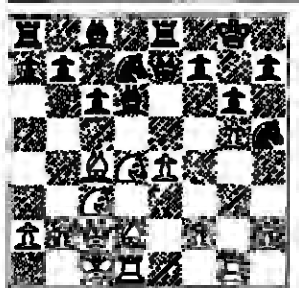
I don't think many men actually play games, but they borrow the terminology. If you crash your car, you might say: "God, I hit that one into the net"; if you win an argument, you shout: "Checkmate!" To go one step further, I think that games answer the competitive nature, or ego, of men. If they think they're good at something, they'll describe it in terms of sport: "I gave it my best shot". If a bunch of women get together, they don't use lacrosse expressions to describe their lives; for instance, you don't hear a woman say: "I really shot the washing-up into the back of the net" – not that all women wash up all of the time – but if a man was having fun doing the washing up, he might say: "I finished it in five moves". I do the washing up; it never seems to bloody stop.

What games do I play? I've played tennis and chess with the same friend for twelve years. Now that we're older, tennis is much more enjoyable – not so many tantrums when we hit the net or the ball goes into someone's garden. In the court on either side of us are usually men in their seventies. I look at them and think: "Great, I'll still be doing this when I'm old."

Marigold Kitchen Extra Life rubber gloves, small, medium or large, with a natural cotton flock lining. Available all over the place for £1.35 (01992-451111 for details).

The games page is edited by William Hartston

Chess William Hartston



If at all possible, you should always try to play the move that your opponent's last move was intended to prevent. It may be worth it for the check value alone, but also the positional damage can be enormous when a move designed to prevent something turns out not to have the desired effect.

The diagram position comes from the game McNab-Wilson, played in the 4 Nations Chess league last weekend. Black had just played 14...g6, keeping the white knight out of f5 and also stopping White's g-pawn from advancing to g6 itself.

That, at least, was the intention, but the Scottish grandmaster playing White continued 15.Nf5! gxf5 16.g6! combining both moves that had supposedly been prevented. However, the sacrifice is by no means clearly correct. White can calculate as far as 16...hxg6 17.Rxg6+ Ng7 17...Kf8 18.Rh6+ are clearly bad for Black 18.Rd1 Be5 19.exd5 Nf8 20.Rh6, but after that it is not easy to

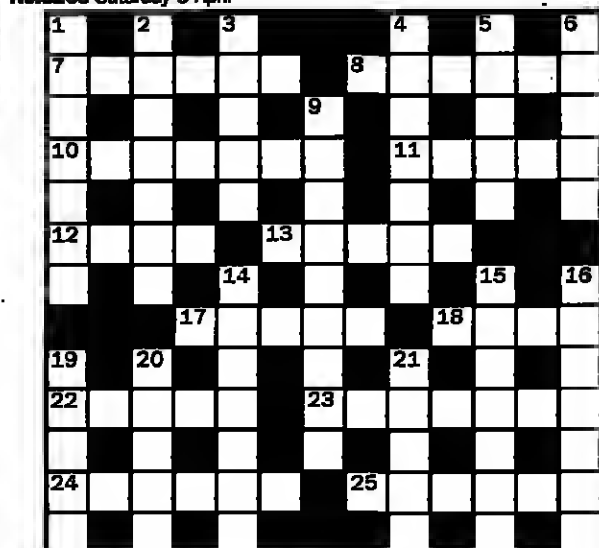
be sure that White's queen can reinforce the attack at h3 before Black can summo up some counter-play. As the game went, Black managed to block the a2-h7 diagonal long enough to force White to invest a whole rook in his attack, but once the diagonal became open again, Black could only buy time at the cost of large material loss.

A good game by McNab whose tricky move-order in the opening seemed to lure his opponent into a variation with which he was not familiar. Black could have secured a comfortable position with 4...g6 instead of 4...e6, while 9...Re8 is a serious waste of time. If he is going to play dxc4 and e5, he should do so at once, keeping the rook on f8.

White: Colin McNab
Black: John Wilson
Semi-Slav Defence
1 e4 e5 17 Rxg6+ Ng7
2 Nf3 d5 18 Rdg1 Be5
3 e3 Nf6 19 exd5 Nf8
4 Qc2 e6 20 Rh6 b5
5 d4 Nbd7 21 Bb3 b4
6 Nc3 Bd6 22 Na4 c5
7 Bd2 0-0 23 Qd3 d4
8 0-0-0 Qe7 24 Qb3 Ng6
9 Rg1 Re8 25 Rxg6 Rxg6
10 g4 dxc4 26 Bxc4+ Be6
11 e4 e5 27 fxe6 Nh5
12 g5 Nh5 28 Rxg6+ Bg7
13 Bxc4 exd4 29 Qxd5 Rxc8
14 Nxd4 g6 30 h3 Qb7
15 Nf5 gxf5 31 Bh6 Qh1+
16 g6 hxg6 32 Qd1 resigns

Concise crossword

No. 3265 Saturday 5 April



ACROSS
7 Reddish-blue colour (6)
8 Bewitching (6)
10 Distinguished (7)
11 Hymn of praise (5)
12 Deserve (4)
13 Dexterity (5)
17 Low-value coin (5)
18 New Zealander (4)
22 Inferior (5)
23 Remedy (7)
24 Pass (6)
25 Clergyman (6)

DOWN
1 Mechanic's tool (7)
2 Speech-making (7)
3 Sphere (5)
4 Practical joke (3-4)
5 Defamation in writing (5)
6 Representative (5)
9 Calculation (9)
14 Restitution (7)
15 Keeper of journal (7)
16 Precious stone (7)
19 Change (5)
20 Curse (5)
21 Normal (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Hackle, 4 Height (Acolyte), 7 Visual aid, 9 Pear, 10 Safe, 11 Strop, 13 Nicely, 14 Waddle, 15 Zenith, 17 Broily, 19 Earls, 20 Rats, 22 Poor, 23 Elevation, 24 Nudged, 25 Eclair. DOWN: 1 Toppet, 2 Kait, 3 Equity, 4 Hallow, 5 Iris, 6 Thief, 7 Vaccinate, 8 Dandelion, 11 Suite, 12 Pairs, 15 Zircon, 16 Halved, 17 Blithe, 18 Yorker, 21 Slug, 22 Roll.

Bridge Alan Hiron

Love all; dealer North
North
♠ A K Q 7 3
♥ 9 5 3
♦ J 7 3
♣ K 3
West
♠ 10 6
♥ Q 7 6
♦ Q 10 8 6 4 2
♣ A J
East
♠ J 9 8 5 4
♥ K 10 8 2
♦ A
♣ 10 5 2
South
♠ 2
♥ A J 4
♦ K 9 5
♣ Q 9 8 7 6 4

The defence was off to an excellent start on this deal but at the end missed a difficult opportunity to complete what would have been a masterpiece. North opened 1♣, South responded 2♠, and North rebid his spades. With both players pushing a little, South tried 2NT and North went on to game. West led ♠ 6 against 3NT and, after winning with his ace, East switched to ♥ 10 – the right suit

Perplexity

Mixed doubles:
Holbein poem sorrow corpse chief ax-man.

The above sentence conceals three loosely related answers, each of two words. To find them, all you have to do is to group the six given words into three pairs, then rearrange the letters within each pair.

Paris flea markets: The number published for James Edwards' antique hunting trips on yesterday's Style page should have been: 01732 842074 or 0421 422400. Apologies to all concerned.

Backgammon Chris Bray

Normally where you find large amounts of money – in a high stakes game of backgammon, for example – you find slightly unscrupulous people who would like to give themselves an edge by illegal means. In other words, plain old-fashioned cheating.

So is there much cheating in backgammon? In any game you can cheat only if the opportunity arises or can be created. This is far easier in a game such as bridge where card sharps and colluding partners can wreck havoc. Backgammon is a game of open information: all the playing pieces are always visible, and thus it is much more difficult to get away with a false play. The rules have also been tightened considerably over the last few years to deal with the problem of accidental illegal moves.

The main area where cheats have been successful in backgammon is with the dice. A good dice mechanic can appear to roll two dice from his cup where in reality he only rolls one of them and places the other on his required number. Being able to "throw" a number at will obviously confers a huge advantage on the practitioner. This problem has been largely overcome by the use of baffle boxes. A baffle box is a device placed at the edge of the board consisting of a number of angled bars of wood enclosed in a boxed structure. Each player must shake his dice in his cup and then into the baffle box. The box completely eliminates the possibility of dice manipulation.

The most ingenious such manipulation was perpetrated by a well known West Coast expert who always did quite well in club play, but exceptionally well in home chouettes. The explanation was a magnetised board and dice operated by a device concealed in his trouser pocket. Needless to say the expert is now persona non grata in the backgammon world! My advice is use a baffle box if you can, always use dice cups (preferably ones with large internal lips) and use precision dice if possible.

There are other possible forms of cheating such as falsifying the score in a mooney game, collusion in chouettes, taking a break in a long tournament match and bringing a different scoresheet back to the table than the one you walked away with and then arguing over the score... and probably countless other small ones.

However, I am pleased to say that in all my years of playing, other than a couple of bounced cheques, and one person with a somewhat dubious dice rolling action, I have never – to my knowledge – had to deal with any form of cheating.



PHILIP MEECH

Kate Beckinsale raises her dark eyes and nods through a mouthful of tomato. Yes, she does remember the day her father died. She falls silent and proceeds to prod the carrot on her plate. Quite what she thinks of my question is hard to tell. She was only five years old when he had a fatal heart attack but references to it will probably haunt Kate throughout her career. As if being five were not a tough enough age to deal with the loss of a parent, the fact that the parent is famous brings other dimensions into play. You try to deal with grief internally, but then interviewers ask you to explain those feelings for public consumption.

The star of the popular series, *The Lovers* and *Porridge*, Richard Beckinsale is such a permanent fixture in TV Repeatland that for us there's an inescapable and incessant reminder that she is his daughter. For Kate it's a constant – possibly painful – reminder of her loss.

"Anybody who's lost anybody knows that while it does get less painful, in that immediate way, it can still catch you 20 years later. Ever since he died he's been on telly very regularly so I'm very used to it. But sometimes I'll catch me out and I'll think, 'Fuck, I'm older now than you were then.' Which makes the task of finding sense in one's own memories even more difficult. Inevitably, there must be a confused blurring between the personal but hazy recollections of a young child and those impressions gleaned off the box. 'I have seen him more on television than I have in life but there are certainly enough memories for me not to feel that it's somebody I didn't know.' At 23, Kate bears more than a passing physical resemblance to her dad. Fresh-skinned and full-lipped she is exceedingly pretty in a very natural, freshly scrubbed, sort of way. Her paternal grandfather is Burmese and

Anybody who has lost anybody knows that while it does get less painful, it can still catch you 20 years later

she's certain it's to those genes she owes her hair. According to her it "sticks out all over the place". But I wouldn't know. In the growing out stage after a short and spiky cut she has it firmly hidden under a floppy velvet hat. "With my mum I often get, 'Ooh you're just like your father.' And she finds that my sense of humour is quite similar to his."

Mum, or "Jude" as she calls her, is actress Judy Loe. Despite her famous parents few, bar the extremely uncharitable, would suggest that Kate is carving out a formidable reputation on anything other than her own merits. Although if her most high-profile nuttings are anything to go by – particularly in *Emma* and as Flora Poste in *Cold Comfort Farm* – for the time being at least she seems rather stuck in playing period misses.

"If there were more good original screenplays around I'd be doing them," she claims. "But the majority of the quality work isn't modern unfortunately and a lot of very good scripts happen to be adapted from very good novels."

"And also I've got a posh voice." So it is, but pleasantly breathy rather than braying. The combination of that and her generous use of double negatives has me mentally conjuring up old Hayley Mills films where well-spoken girls anguished over sick animals. That this image suggests itself is no doubt due in part to the fact that she has brought along her poorly kitted to the interview.

Carefully wrapped in Kate's coat, kitty is allocated the chair so we adjourn, Ruby Wax style, to be on the hotel bed. Stretched out and reaching for the first of several Silk Cuts, every answer is as lucidly sure-footed as it is direct. It is not arrogant, instead, she displays uncanny composure, whether she's discussing her current plans to write a screenplay or pondering the personal consequences of her childhood. The latter is a recurring theme. Not that she isn't chuffed with her stepfather, director Roy Battersby. "I couldn't have knitted a better one," she says. He moved in when she was nine. For a vulnerable child, still grieving and accustomed to her mother's exclusive attention, it could have been tricky for everyone. "Roy knew I was a traumatised little person. He didn't expect this idyllic little girl in plaits who'd be nice to him. I wasn't sure whether I wanted my mum to marry anyone else. [In fact, they have never married.] And I certainly didn't want any brothers. Roy had four sons and one daughter. I wasn't in a boy-mood. He's been so brilliant. He wasn't pushy, he let me come to him."

In what was a precarious position even by step-parent standards, Roy played his opening cards extremely astutely. "There was a big fancy dress party and I was going as Carmen Miranda. On the first meeting I had with him he turned up with this fantastic Carmen Miranda hat. I thought, 'Here is a man who understands dressing up.'"

Yet she does concede that perhaps she wasn't the easiest of little girls. When she wasn't outside their Chiswick house attempting to flog the contents of her mother's fruit bowl she was showing off. "I was the sort of child who would stick on a tutu and shout, 'Look at me, look at me!' and then everybody would and I'd get embarrassed and say, 'Don't look.' She breaks into giggles. "I'm probably still like that actually."

As a teenager, that harmless attention seeking became something far more dangerous. At 15, she simply stopped eating, a reaction she directly attributes to her father's death. "I'm probably four stone heavier now than I was at my thinnest," she says, matter of factly gesturing to her body. Wrapped up in obscuring baggy layers, it's nevertheless obvious there's not a spare ounce as she is. "At my lowest I was about five stone. Had I been older when I had a breakdown I think I would have been an alcoholic."

She refers to it unashamedly as a breakdown. "Anorexia is a breakdown," she insists. "It's just that the mode of it happens to be the most accessible thing for teenage girls to do. It's very prevalent in teenagers because in those years there is the most amazing renaissance of your whole self. Anything that's lurking comes and bites you in the neck. For some kids, if something traumatic happens to them when they're very young they pick something safer to worry about. The worst thing

Kate Beckinsale talks to Janie Lawrence

about it is that it takes on a life of its own separate from whatever's caused it. So you're stuck with the symptoms, or mentality, of it even when you have cracked what caused it."

If all this sounds a polished self-analysis, it is. Knowing that she was in trouble, Kate promptly went to her mother and requested Freudian analysis. For a teenager deep in the throes of anorexia it displays both a stunningly mature insight and a high degree of self-preservation.

"I was always able to talk to my mum. I could say anything from, 'What's a blow job?' to 'Are you sure you still love me?' And my family were very respectful of analysis so I'd grown up with it being a good thing rather than a bad. I knew that unless I did face some things I would probably die myself. If it had just been dealt with as a food problem I wouldn't be over it now. If you just treat the symptoms of it you're fucked. It has to be addressed as a whole part of your life."

Has she reached a conclusion as to why she was especially susceptible? "I think there were all kinds of different reasons. Although I know not everybody who gets anorexia has a parent that's died, if you learn as a kid that seemingly fairly healthy

people drop dead at 31 it sets you up in a fairly crap way. And there's a certain amount of guilt that flies around."

That she has talked about this at all when the PR has already warned me that it is a no-go area has come as a surprise. She herself worries as to how it will appear. "I don't want people thinking that I'm whingeing on again. But considering I'm one of the only people I know who's been lucky enough to get over it I think it's worth talking about even if it helps only one person."

Certainly she's scoffing down her salad and claims that these days she never weighs herself or has any residual hang-ups from those years. Twice, sometimes three-weekly analysis sessions stretching through four years have left her, she says, with no ground left to cover. She grins, "I think I must be about 45 in analysis terms. Now I can't go back until I'm 50." Not surprisingly during this period, her appearances at school – Godolphin and Latymer in west London – were bit-and-miss affairs. "I stopped being able to function in my life. I was this mad. I'd turn up 20 minutes before the end of the double lesson and go, 'Sorry I'm late' and sit down."

She usually worked at home and still managed to secure a place at New College, Oxford to read French and Russian. "The headmistress was very tolerant but there were a few teachers who were very pissed off that I got into Oxford – I don't suppose they could take any credit for it."

She had already decided that she wanted to act but says, rather hilariously, that she chose university over drama school so that she could mix with mathematicians and geographers. Yet it wasn't long before she was juggling her course and acting jobs. By the end of her first year, while her fellow students headed off to waitress, she was part of the Ken and Em show, playing Hero in *Much Ado about Nothing*. After spending her third year in Paris she knew that she had to make a choice. "It was getting to the point where I wasn't enjoying either thing enough because both were very high pressure. I was burning out and I knew I had to make a decision."

She has a steely resolve that where work is concerned there are certain things she won't compromise upon. Nudity is not.

Underwear? Out too. The temptation is to think that maybe, despite her protestations, she still has unresolved issues about her body. It's a lazy assumption and rather patronising, particularly as she is one of those rare 23-year-olds who declares herself a feminist and doesn't follow it up with an apologetic "but".

"I remember saying to Helen Mirren, 'Do you just do nudes when it's necessary in the plot?' and she said, 'It never is.'"

"I thought, if she said it's not, then I'm not doing it. If the climate were not such that I was always expected to do it then I would. But I think it's worrying that every script says we think your character would probably have a shower at this point. Well, she'd probably have a shit at this point but you don't want to see that."

She's on a roll. "There seems to be this worrying new wave of feminism which says if you're in charge of your own exploitation then it's OK. Everybody is still being shafted but they think

I said to Helen Mirren, 'Do you just do nudes when it's necessary to the plot?' She said, 'It never is'

they're being liberated, which is worse."

Thankfully, none of her recent well-received television appearances have required her to get her kit off. As Emma in the TV adaptation of the Jane Austen novel she was firmly buttoned up. A crisp and self-possessed portrayal, for Austen purists it captured Emma's motivations in a way that the Hollywood film, with its inordinately long lingering close ups of Gwyneth Paltrow's neck, didn't even attempt. Mention the big-screen extravaganza and, endearingly, Kate doesn't launch into standard actressy diplomatic stuff.

"I didn't like anything about the film," she says. "I thought it was rather cowardly, in the sense that Austen wrote that she was a character nobody would like but herself. In the book, she's not allowed to go anywhere, whereas in the film she was doing archery and having a great life. They also inserted a lot of modern gags into it which is a bit of a cheap shot and shows you don't trust your material. Ours wasn't perfect by any means either. If you're really going to do it you should have hack-teeth and no make up."

In yet another recent period piece she plays the busy-boddy Flora Poste in the entertaining *Cold Comfort Farm*, based on the Stella Gibbons novel. Already shown on television here, the Americans have been lapping it up at the cinema and it's about to be given a cinema release in Britain.

While this Beckinsale has made her name in worthy enterprises, her half-sister, Samantha, is best known for her role in *London's Burning*. The two met briefly in early childhood but didn't talk again until Kate was 21. "She got in touch and I was a bit nervous of meeting her because I wanted to get on with her. I thought, 'What if she's horrible?' Luckily, she was really nice."

Now that they are both in the same profession, there have been farce-like scenarios of mistaken identity with cabbies. "I don't know how she experiences it but I often get people who are bitterly disappointed. Or the odd fan letter congratulating me on my performance in *London's Burning*."

Happily paired off with fellow actor Michael Sheen – "Is he the one? I hope he is" – it seems unlikely Beckinsale will ever be troubled by her childhood traumas again. Not that she's complacent. "As soon as you think you've sorted it out, that's when you start falling downstairs a lot."

Indeed, there's an unguarded moment of panic before I leave. "Please don't let it be a what a tragic life I've led" article. I'm not living on an estate somewhere surrounded by crack addicts, pregnant, with no future. I've been very lucky."

Ah, so she's a classic swan? Still on the outside but paddling furiously underneath. She beams and scoops up the cat. "Yes, I like that."

'Cold Comfort Farm' goes on general release on 25 April

Concise as it was, Labour's manifesto this week did at least have three paragraphs headed *Arts and Culture*. The three paragraphs contained two firm commitments. One was a plan for new "quality assurance in hotel accommodation" for tourists, which is, shall we say, somewhat lateral to cultural concerns. Indeed a hotel tax with money collected going to museums and galleries, an idea avoided in all the manifestos, might have rather more benefits for the arts, as it certainly does in other countries. Why do we never contemplate that?

The other commitment is the establishment of a National Endowment for Science and the Arts to sponsor young talent. It will be partly funded by the lottery and partly by artists and scientists who, in a new golden age of five-star hotels for everyone, will be altruistic enough to leave the

profits of certain copyrights and patents to the next generation. The manifesto does not say whose idea Nesta was. In fact, the central plank of Labour's arts policy emanates from Rory Coonan, once the head of architecture at the Arts Council and now a freelance adviser on design policy. So freelance in fact that he also advises Virginia Bottomley on architecture. Perhaps Rory's non-partisanship is one reason why no one on the Labour front bench has yet publicly credited him with string Nesta.

It was a different class of anorak that attended the National Film Theatre face-to-face with Nick Hornby this week. The creator of the love, life and Arsenal Football Club story, *Fever Pitch*, had pinned himself for questioning by the buff but found himself



David Lister
arts notebook

confronting an audience of arthouse Arsenal supporters. How, asked one perturbed questioner, could a character be shown wearing an away strip in 1971 that did not yet exist? And, in a voice tempered with pity and disgust, another pointed out that an extra on the terraces was drinking a can of Holsten Pils. What was cinematically wrong with that? "Because they are the sponsors of



our rivals Tottenham. We wouldn't be seen dead drinking that."

What a pity that *House*, the BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary on the Royal Opera House, was not shot this year. Not only could it have contained the current triumphs of the Royal Ballet – I saw an American woman outside the Royal Opera House offering a wad of notes for any seat to see

Darcey Bussell and Sylvie Guillem dancing together in *La Bayadère*; it could also have merged fly-on-the-wall documentary and sitcom, by focusing on the antics of the ROH's administration as it tries to avoid making clear what it is going to do with its companies during the impending two-year closure of the House.

In short, a letter arrives from Keith Cooper, head of corporate

affairs, the day before Easter, saying a "headline press statement" will be mailed "before Easter." The advantages of the fax machine are pointed out to him, but still no headline press statement or even downpage press statement arrives. In its stead, an invitation to a breakfast briefing last Wednesday with opera house chairman Lord Chadlington. This breakfast meeting is cancelled at around 8pm the night before. What are they trying to hide? Whatever it is, they failed. For the rather more efficient Barbican Centre innocently issues a press release detailing how the Royal Opera and Royal Ballet will perform at the Barbican Theatre during the Royal Opera House closure.

Marvellous news for Cliff Richard. His image is about to receive a much needed injection of street

cred. American evangelist Geoff Godwin, in Northern Ireland with a lecture tour called "The Hidden Dangers of Rock Music". Sadly, his briefing documents seem to stop at 1958. He told a Belfast audience this week that Sir Cliff led young people astray, and his life is built on money and adoration, even if some of his songs are not "overly Satanic". Godwin adds that Sir Cliff sings "lustful lyrics" and makes hundreds of thousands of pounds from "adoring fans who idolise him and not God". Sir Cliff, who is currently in London playing *Heathcliff* in the not overly Satanic musical, issued a statement through a spokesman saying: "Cliff believes everyone is entitled to their own opinion and he will answer to God." That statement presumably applies only to the current controversy and is not a riposte to the *Heathcliff* reviews.

arts & books

Personality – by design

Red socks, Versace waistcoats, gold-buttoned tails – *le style*, as they say in France, *est l'homme même*. And this particular *homme* is one stylish pianist. **Edward Seckerson** meets **Jean-Yves Thibaudet**

It's unlikely to be the hands you notice first but the feet. The socks, actually. The elegant young man making his way to the Steinway grand is wearing red socks. He usually does. They've become something of a trademark, a *porte-bonheur*. As have the Gianni Versace waistcoats and sleek, gold-buttoned tails. He has an aristocratic air, a touch of Versailles about him. But it's a friendly, modern face – aquiline nose, blond, immaculately coiffed hair – that gratefully acknowledges the applause. "People need to know who you are," says Jean-Yves Thibaudet. Meaning that, in these days of corporate image-making, you're never quite sure. But make no mistake, this is Thibaudet – the image, the wardrobe, the presentation. And catwalk or concert platform, only one thing matters as he takes his seat at the keyboard. Now you notice his hands.

So how style-conscious is the playing? Very. But not style-conscious as in narcissistic, superficial, precious. There is a tendency to characterise the French school of playing thus, which irritates Thibaudet. He end and may have something to do with his reluctance to be labelled a "French pianist". He's not thoroughbred in that respect, anyway, his mother being German (from Hamburg), his father French. But his principal studies did take place in Paris, his first teacher was Lucille Descaves, former assistant of Marguerite Long and a student of both Fauré and Ravel, and he does feel part of that tradition. Descaves played the Ravel G major Concerto under the composer's own direction and was the proud possessor of his precisely annotated scores. So when Thibaudet came to study this music, the answers to all his questions – the key to unlocking its myriad colours – were there in black and white. The slow movement of the concerto was to be played "as simply as possible – a pure, singing line". No rubato, "no hutter in the sauce", as Poulenc might have had it (he, of course, liked plenty of butter in his sauce). And it was this clarity and transparency, this coolness of expression that came to typify the French sound. It's all in the pedalling, says Thibaudet. "Ravel was the most classical of French composers, much more restrained emotionally than, say, Poulenc, who for me is so typically Parisian – an extrav-

gant, decadent personality. Ravel was meticulous about detail; he hated pianists who obscured that detail by slamming down their foot. Debussy mixed his colours and his harmonies more – in that sense he was much more of an impressionist – but clarity is still the major factor. Not dry, just clear." Limpid is a good word. Thibaudet's Decca recording of Ravel's solo piano music is limpid. So, too, his Debussy.

It's this relating of sound to style, and vice versa, that is at the heart of all great pianism. "I know that the process is working when I'm no longer conscious of it working," says Thibaudet. "Brahms, for instance, has its own sound – a deep, warm, resonant, meaty sound. When you play Brahms, you feel your way much more deeply into the keys. With Ravel, you can ride the surface of the keys. A *forte* in Brahms is quite different from a *forte* in Brahms. Even 'Scarbo' [the most fiendishly virtuosic movement in all Ravel] is never really full-on. It plays all kinds of tricks on you. It comes and goes..."

Rather like the so-called "golden age" of pianism. Did we really see its passing with the likes of Rubinstein, Horowitz and Cherkassky? Whatever happened to the great individualists? Or are we simply succumbing to nostalgia here? Thibaudet thinks not. Rubinstein was for him "the complete artist", a man whose *joie de vivre* could be felt in every aspect of his playing. "He was typical of a whole generation where music-making was personal. Whether you liked them or not, each of these players had a strong identity of their own. I can put on a record, and after only a couple of bars I can tell you who it is: they had a sound, these players, their sound. How many pianists can you say that of today?"

"You see, we live in a competitive age. Conservatoires train their students to win competitions, and in order to win competitions you can't be too personal. Because, in that situation, one judge will love you and another will very likely hate you. And that's a co-win situation. So what we're really talking about here – if we're not very careful – is a kind of 'standardisation', a whole generation of brilliant musical robots."

One's mind goes back to the 1980 International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, when Martha Argerich stormed off the jury after Ivo Pogorelich failed to make the final rounds. Maybe she had glimpsed

the future and didn't like what she saw?

Maybe. Even so, young musicians like Thibaudet are determined to buck the trends. Take recording. It's time, he believes (and he assures me that he is not alone), to make only those recordings where there is a strong creative imperative (or catalogue need: the Khachaturian and Lowell Lieberman concertos are pending, for instance, and he'd like to record the Barber, the perfect coupling for the concerto Gian Carlo Menotti has promised to write for him). He wants to make "interesting" not "perfect" records. Even if there was such a thing as perfection (for "perfect" read "perfunctory"), the day an artist stops seeking answers to the big questions, questions he can never know all the answers to, then it's time to hang up the tails.

The night before our interview, Thibaudet and one of his regular chamber music partners, the violinist Joshua Bell, were at New York's Carnegie Hall rounding off a short US tour. And it was precisely the kind of "musical evolution" that truly collaborative musicians like this thrive on. "Every night you learn something about the pieces you play. You try something different, you risk something new. Something in your attitude shifts, you come at the music from a slightly different perspective. It should be the same with records. You make the record on Tuesday. By Wednesday it is already different."

And by Thursday – the record producer's nightmare. But there speaks the live performer. Thibaudet enjoys making records – which he fancifully likens to "playing for friends" – but public performances bring out the showman in him. He loves an audience, a sense of occasion – he loves (let's not hedge here) the limelight. Ask him who he'd choose for his imaginary one-to-one and I'll wager it would be Franz Liszt. He hasn't yet taken in leaving his gloves on the piano for the ladies (and gentlemen) to fight over, but I imagine he's working on it. Audiences at the Met in New York may have witnessed something of a dry run last season when he swept on stage in Act 2 of Giordano's *Fedora* in the guise of the "celebrated Polish pianist Boleslaw Lazinski". Judging from the notices he received, Mirilla Freni and Plácido Domingo could count their lucky stars he wasn't singing.



Whether he's playing Ravel or Bill Evans, Jean-Yves Thibaudet makes sure that people know exactly who he is

He has a "terrible voice", he adds reassuringly, but adores opera and reveres singers. "Ten years in any conservatory in the world won't teach you what you can learn from preparing a single recital programme with singers like Brigitte Fassbaender or Cecilia Bartoli. We pianists are forever trying to make an essentially percussive instrument sing. It's an illusion at best, but by listening and playing for singers, you can get closer than you ever imagined." And because he is as good as his word, he's including a singer – the mezzo Angelika Kirchschlager – in his trio of Wigmore Hall concerts this month. The cellist Truls Mørk joins him for the third concert – on the surface of it, a glorious mismatch of personalities, the one shy and retiring, the other flamboyant. But they connect. And that's the point. Music is an interactive business. The word "accompanist" (don't even breathe it to Thibaudet) is obsolete – and that's official.

And while we're about it, hasn't "crossover" had its day, too? Thibaudet has a new album in the shops – the music of jazz pianist, Bill Evans – but trust me, he

hasn't "crossed over" in his life. "All music is related. All of it comes from essentially the same place. Look at Ravel and Gershwin. I've always loved jazz piano – Fats Waller, Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson, and Bill Evans, the most refined, the most 'classical' of them all. From time to time I've fooled around with jazz musician friends of mine in New York. It's great, it's really liberating musically. So when one of the Decca executives came to me and said, 'You know, I was listening to your Ravel recording the other night, and guess what it reminded me of, I know. It's unbelievable how close some of Bill Evans's chords are to Ravel and Debussy.'"

So the idea for the album was born. Thibaudet and his colleagues chose the material, made the arrangements, the basic text serving as a "departure point" for each track. "The idea," says Thibaudet, "was not at all to imitate Bill Evans, but to find my own way to his pieces." The album's called *Conversations with Bill Evans* – because that's just what it is. "I'm not a jazz pianist and I never will be. But, you know, it's amazing how this kind of work frees up your clas-

sical performances. Making this album really sharpened my perception of rhythm, in particular, because you can do whatever you want with rubato in this music, but that rhythmic heartbeat cannot move."

So not crossover, but cross-fertilisation. Thibaudet can't get enough of it. "What we need now is more and more interaction between the arts, just as they had in Paris at the time of Diaghilev."

To that end, he might well make music for some future Versace fashion show, just as next year in Ann Arbor, Michigan, there are plans for him to lend his pianistic impressionism to a retrospective of Monet's work. Heaven forbid he should make an exhibition of himself for less. *Thibaudet at the Wigmore Hall: solo recital (Debussy, Chopin) 7.30 Tuesday; with Angelika Kirchschlager, mezzo-soprano (Hölder by Strauss, Berg, Wolf, Gustav & Alma Mahler, Korngold) 7pm Sunday 13 April; with Truls Mørk, cello (Brahms, Shostakovich, Rachmaninov) 7.30 Tuesday 15 April. Booking: 0171-935 2141. 'Conversations with Bill Evans' is on the Decca label (CD 455 512-2)*

NEXT WEEK IN THE INDEPENDENT

JILLY COOPER

The first lady of pun 'n' passion tells Deborah Ross about lust, her looks ('like a Dutch cheese coming at you') and why she let her husband throw out all her clothes



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overview

our view on view critical view



THE FILM	THE PLAY	THE INSTALLATION
Fever Pitch	Popcorn	Tight Roaring Circle
Colin Firth, lust object of Bridget Jones et al, stars in Nick Hornby's screenplay of his engrossing, beautifully written autobiographical bestseller about the excitement and excesses of fandom and a life devoted to the fortunes of Arsenal FC. The film also stars Ruth Gemmell and Mark Strong, with David Evans directing.	Ben Elton's stage version of his bravura satirical bestseller with Patrick O'Kane and Dena Davis as white trash killers imitating the screen violence of a Tarantino / Stone-style Oscar-winning film director (Danny Webb). Laurence Boswell directs the West End transfer of the hit Nottingham Playhouse production.	Becks / Artangel, the organisation which set up Rachel Whiteread's <i>House</i> and the sensational <i>HG</i> , brought together composer Joel Ryan and choreographers Dana Caspersen and William Forsythe and put them in a vast Victorian engine shed where they built an installation of sound and light: a giant, white, bouncy castle.
Adam Mars-Jones detected a bad case of "Arsenal syndrome: the throwing away of opportunities, compulsive repetition of basic mistakes." "I am horribly intrigued by how a supposedly witty feat of literary handstanding has turned into a movie that lies flat on its face gasping for air," puzzled the FT. "Strictly second division... It's still amusing enough in a 'funny old game' kind of way," decided <i>Time Out</i> . Faithful and true to the spirit of the book, argued <i>Late Review</i> . "Veers uncomfortably between contemporary laddishness and a shrewd cultural nostalgia," observed <i>The Guardian</i> . "The film's sheer friendliness is its most endearing feature... ebullience, generous heart and delight in the follies of life," smiled <i>The Times</i> . "Puts provocative ideas across clearly and sensitively," enthused <i>The Telegraph</i> .	Paul Taylor preferred the novel but welcomed "such an enjoyable, intelligent, thought-provoking play... Patrick O'Kane gives an electrifying performance." "Elton's zinging, punchy thriller has a cartoon vigour but the moral purpose of Jacobean revenge drama... literally, a bloody good night out," cheered the FT. "Superb Danny Webb... Intellectually stimulating entertainment," affirmed <i>The Telegraph</i> . "Gripping, stimulating... Boswell's fast, crisp production... good for Ben Elton for giving us tough subjects to chew," nodded <i>The Times</i> . "It thrills on stage precisely because it adopts the sick humour, sickening violence and downright sexism ... that Elton is satirising," declared <i>The Standard</i> . "Shoots from the hip and misses the target... a disappointing evening," sniffed <i>The Guardian</i> .	John O'Reilly raved. "Pulsates with movement and the bursts of crescendos. The overall effect is what you imagine walking on the moon might be like... who said the sublime wasn't fun?" "Leave your shoes at the door and bounce yourself silly," grinned the <i>Independent on Sunday</i> . "All over the castle traditional British reserve gradually gave way to a surprising appetite for fun... the extraordinary state of relaxation it engenders," gloried <i>The Times</i> . "Titanic childishness... Sculpture? Installation? Game? Just what is it?" worried <i>The Telegraph</i> . "One of the dumbest works I've encountered in a long time," growled <i>The Guardian</i> . "Call me Mr Grumpy Trousers but I found myself hugely underwhelmed," announced <i>The Sunday Times</i> .
Cert 15, 100 minutes. Odeon Marble Arch (0181-315 4216) and on general release.	At the Apollo Theatre, London W1. (0171-494 5070).	The Camden Roundhouse, London NW1 (0171-336 6803). To 27 April.
From Mr Darcy to Mr D'Arsenal... deeply disappointing unless you're a life-long Arsenal fan. However, even if you (like me) have never been to a football match you should read Hornby's book.	A sharp-eyed, smart-mouthed, topical satire with teeth driven by the passion of Elton's arguments about responsibility. A shot in the arm for the West End but the film version – should it happen – will be even better.	Put on a clean pair of socks and rush over. Warning: there is less to discuss here than meets the eye: this is art to take part in. It is also proof positive that not all arts sponsorship is for the sake and certain.



The object of seeing

A new exhibition at the Hayward celebrates the object in British art over the past two decades. A mirror, a skip and piles of dust – these are just a few of John O'Reilly's favourite things

Roland Barthes once remarked that in the modern world it is impossible to come across even the most natural object that has not somewhere been coded, packaged in such a way that our subsequent perception of it feels mediated. Can you think of sweetcorn without the Jolly Green Giant bumbling into your head or dream of surf without summoning up Old Spice? But however hard you tried, you could not have begun to imagine some of the objects on display in "Material Culture", the new exhibition at London's Hayward Gallery.

The subtitle of the show is "The Object in British Art of the 1980s and 1990s". With over 40 artists on show, its range is extensive: from Richard Deacon and Rachel Whiteread, who make work that belongs to a tradition of sculpture, to Damien Hirst, whose work owes as much of a debt to the disciplines of pickling and pharmacology. It doesn't attempt to group the artists together in terms of generation or as representatives of a certain British style. One space, for example, contains Anthony Gormley's cast-iron *Still Falling*, a cocoon-like hanging like a massive turd from the ceiling. Beside this, and attached to the wall, is Damien Hirst's striking, but comparatively restrained *The Lovers* – a cabinet containing jars of cow parts. And if Gormley's dense body demands to be looked at, Anish Kapoor's huge *Curved Mirror* on an adjacent wall

completely distorts your vision, creating a hallucinatory sense of depth where there is none. The show's curators, Michael Archer and Greg Hilly, have constructed a curious narrative of objects. As Archer explains: "There are mixtures of things, so you find echoes and refractions as you move from one gallery to the next."

Take, for example, Tony Cragg's *Spectrum* – a jarringly pleasant rectangle of colourful, found plastic tat. It's laid on the floor right beside Gavin Turk's obscenely huge black skip, *Pimp*. Your initial impulse is to get a brush and pan, scoop up the bits of rubbish and stick them in the bin. It represents a continuation of his early work in which he masqueraded as a famous artist called "Gavin Turk", subverting the conventions that confer aesthetic value – the context of the gallery and the artist's signature.

While Turk's shiny black streetwise skip is a bold and brash pimp, Shireaz Houshiary's monumental black *Isthmus* resembles the silent monolith in 2001. But perhaps the most discreet work is Christine Borland's spooky, ethereal, spectral *From Life, Berlin*. The piece consists of 21 glass panels inserted high on the gallery walls. On each panel, Borland has placed a group of bones (the hand, the spine etc), sprinkled them with dust and then removed them. A spotlight directed at the glass leaves a negative trace of the bones on the wall. This exhibit is the endpoint to



The material world: Gavin Turk's 'Pimp' (above) and Anthony Gormley's 'Still Falling' (inset)

a body of work begun in 1991 when the artist worked with police detectives on a derelict site in Glasgow. She gathered material from the surroundings which was examined by forensic experts. The discarded bits and pieces told a story of the life and events of the people in the area. The results were displayed and discussed with visiting members of the public.

Fascinated by what detective-fiction fans call "procedure" and what artists call "process", Borland discovered by default that you could purchase real human bones and applied these methodologies to reconstruct the life of a skeleton. "The skeleton had completely lost all identity. It actually came from India and it was about the second last you could buy because they had begun an investigation there into how they were being obtained. It turned out there was an exact parallel to the situation here in the 19th century, when early anatomists obtained their specimens by getting destitute people bumped off."

Just as the fictional detectives in Barry Levinson's slice of *verité* TV drama *Homicide* insist that their job is about giving a voice to the dead, letting them speak, so Borland's piece was about returning an identity to what had simply become a commodity, a product. Working at the University of Glasgow, Borland established that the skeleton belonged to a 25-year-old Indian woman. She then went on to reconstruct the head which became

referred to history as a nightmare. he was pointing out that the problem with the dead is not that they have been silenced, but that they have been shut up. The mixture of found objects, artefacts, relics and text in the cabinet sets off a string of interminable associations.

Moving through the gallery, you are faced with a mix of the startling and the unobtrusive. Cathy de Monchaux's *Grief* is quiet to the point of almost disappearing. It seems strange to admit to being seduced and annoyed by a "thing". In the late 1980s, she produced lush objects constructed out of metals and velvet.

From a distance, *Grief* looks like a series of shelves that offers the promise of being functional, of having some purpose. But on closer inspection, the finely detailed metal and silk structure turns out to be a tease – just decorative DIY. De Monchaux admits that the acceleration of contemporary life can make things difficult for artists. "The invention of everything has speeded up. You can make Dolly the sheep or a mouse with an ear on its back. I think it makes it harder and good but this was trying to do that for a complete unknown."

The work at the Hayward was originally shown in an abandoned factory in Berlin. "It's just a shadow that you could blow away. It relates to the fragility and vulnerability of the human situation and I felt dust was a fitting end." But if Borland's work is about letting the dead speak, Susan Hiller's collection of artefacts, *From the Freud Museum*, seems to present a different dilemma. When James Joyce



Becky Simpson, the 10-year-old actress who plays the 'idiot savant' Spoonface Steinberg

You make a grown man cry

Robert Hanks talks to the heart-string tugging playwright Lee Hall

When *Spoonface Steinberg* was first broadcast on Radio 4 in January this year, the response was staggering: the BBC logged over 200 calls praising the play, demanding repeats, wanting to know if it was possible to buy it on tape. "I am a truck-driver," said one caller, keen to establish his manly credentials, "and I was in tears." There were reports of drivers pulling in at the side of the road, too moved to be safe in traffic. More than two months later the author, Lee Hall, is still getting letters.

On the phone from Newcastle, Hall is amazed: "It was a huge shock, because I was worried that people would think 'What's this, a kid talking about cancer for an hour?'... It's one of those things you can't legislate for."

For those who didn't hear it, *Spoonface Steinberg* was an hour-long monologue spoken by a seven-year-old autistic girl dying of cancer (an utterly unaffected performance by 10-year-old Becky Simpson). Spoonface is an idiot savant, able to multiply numbers instantly or tell you the day of the week of any date in history. She talks with a mixture of wisdom, innocence and stoicism about her impending death, her parents' fragile relationship, grand opera, Hasidic theology and a host of other subjects.

The degree of appreciation may have astonished Hall, but he must be getting used to astonishment. His first radio play, *I Love U Jimmy Spud*, was, like *Spoonface*, an eccentric, intellectually eclectic and emotionally frank work. This time about a small boy coping with his father's cancer – the twist being that Jimmy is a trainee angel.

It won him an Alfred Bradley Bursary, a Richard Imison Award, the Sony Award for best radio play of 1996, and a commission to write three more plays. (All his plays so far have been commissioned by the producer Kate Rowland, who

has been rewarded with promotion to head of radio drama for England.)

The four plays were broadcast through January under the general title *God's Country*. Whether the phrase refers to childhood, to death or to Hall's native Tyneside – themes common to all four plays – is open to question. "A little bit of all of them," Hall reckons. "I was always interested in this idea of Tyneside as a post-industrial place... when those heavy industries broke down, where that leaves us" – a theme that gained in weight when he lived abroad (these definitively Geordie plays were mostly written in Greenwich Village).

He was drawn to the idea of writing about children after working in youth theatres: "I was always fascinated by how, intellectually, the kids had such a grasp of the problems they were having." At their best, the plays have an emotional power foreign to radio drama; at their worst, they can verge on the mawkish.

That's not the case with Hall's other broadcast play, *Gristle*, the grim story of a soldier returning from Northern Ireland with his genitals blown off. (Hall contrasts it with the comparatively light tone of his work about children and terminal disease.) *Gristle* shows how unsentimental Hall can be; it also shows what you might not have guessed, how far his mould-breaking plays are informed by theatrical tradition. A version of Ernst Toller's play *Hinkemann*, which Hall first encountered when reading English at Cambridge, *Gristle* is now scheduled for performance at the Gate Theatre in London.

Meanwhile, his first TV screenplay is about to start shooting: a film is planned of *Jimmy Spud*. *Spoonface Steinberg* is to be released on cassette; and the *God's Country* scripts are to be published in book form. Truck-drivers everywhere should have their hankies ready.

Sweet lullaby of death

CLASSICAL ECO / Harry Christophers Barbican Centre, London

If Harry Christophers' reputation was initially established through his work on early music with his choir, The Sixteen, he has proved to command a much wider range of styles, and he directed the English Chamber Orchestra in an impressive concert of 19th- and 20th-century French music at the Barbican Centre on Wednesday evening.

Immediately evident was his way with harmonic texture and orchestral sonority, and in Ravel's *Le Tombeau de Couperin* he drew from his players the most fastidiously weighted sound, frequently allowing the purely sonic quality of the composer's remarkable invention to make expressive points. Taking more than usually seriously Ravel's reflection of 18th-century keyboard music, Christophers avoided the romantic mannerisms that characterise some interpretations of the piece and generated a baroque rhythmic impetus. The Minuet might have been taken a little too briskly for some tastes, but overall this was a thoughtful and multi-dimensional performance reaching back in time rhythmically while acknowledging the floating sonorities of Ravel's 20th-century ear.

The quality of sensually graded sound continued to mark all that both Christophers and his orchestra did, whether in the peaty greys and silvers of Fauré or the Gallic crispness of Saint-Saëns. With his boldly imaginative approach to the arching lyricism of Fauré's *Élégie*, cello soloist Raphael Wallfisch found himself supported by an orchestral accompaniment of wide dynamic range (it was a joy to hear genuine pianissimos of palpable sonority) and of pastel beauty. This was an interpretation to recall with pleasure, and it was the prelude to a vigorous

and elegantly shaped reading of Saint-Saëns's Concerto in A minor.

Urgent in expression, yet with the space to let the Minuet's uncanny recall of childhood innocence make its exquisite point, this was again a performance to cherish, and Wallfisch's sovereign technique brought Saint-Saëns's highly characteristic world superbly to life, touching in emotion yet unsentimental and graciously poised.

So far, so very good, yet the highlight of the programme was yet to come, for after the interval we heard a most moving and commandingly structured performance of Fauré's *Requiem*, one which had you searching your memory for an interpretation of comparable intensity and perfection of delivery in both the orchestral and choral forces.

The Tallis Chamber Choir, with the bright, edgy quality of their sopranos perfectly suited to the French repertoire, and their firmly centred lower textures, served Fauré's movingly discreet and intimate vision perfectly. They rose to the work's few climactic moments with becoming vigour and for the rest sustained a calm intensity that did indeed evoke the "lullaby of death" envisaged by the composer. Baritone Michael George, although suffering from a throat infection, sang with style and warmth, and treble Connor Burrows gave us a marvellous "Pie Jesu", stalwart in the face of audience coughing that threatened disruption. One recalled a Zubin Mehta story in which an irate listener rose to his feet under similar circumstances and shouted: "This is a concert hall, not a sanatorium."

Anthony Payne

Casualties of the classification wars

THEATRE The Censor / Surfing Finborough Theatre, London

Anthony Neilson earned himself the title "Bad Boy Controversialist of British Theatre" with works like *Penetrator*, a black, tense comedy about the kind of homophobia that is the twisted product of repressed homosexual desires. That play, with its marital, knife-wielding squabble and his horrific tales of systematic tragedy and non-consensual buggery in the ranks, prompted one commentator to write that, while he was no fan of censorship, here was "a case for self-censorship". Cut to Mr Neilson's latest drama, which focuses on a film censor and his relationship with a young female director who wants him to pass her hard-core movie.

In *Blue Murder*, Peter Nichols recently produced a sharp comedy that presented the old Lord Chamberlain's office, in its last days in 1967, as a farcical botched for precisely the kind of shenanigans and language it blue-pencilled in plays. But the piece wound up contending that the removal of censorship has been bad for artists, because restrictions are paradoxically freeing (a proposition surely truer, though, of form than of content).

Neilson's *The Censor* homes in on a situation that might itself be the basis of a porn movie. Young, repressed, anally retentive, unhappily married Scots censor (an excellent Alastair Galbraith) is confronted by Miss Fontaine, a disconcertingly composed, attractive, and implacable female director (Raquel Cassidy). She's determined to change his mind about banning her film, and to that end, soon has her busy hands down his trousers. So far, so standard porn set-up. But Miss Fontaine assures us that these come-ons are also part of a more philosophical mission to make the censor see the "deeper human meaning" in the relentless sexual activity in her film.

Within a red neon frame, Neilson's finely judged production, with its long, loaded pauses, brings out all the comic tension and intensity in the couple's engagements – counterpointed by short scenes of marital misery between the censor and his faithless wife. But, as the censor himself says, it's impossible to imagine Miss Fontaine anywhere except in his office. If her reality weren't apparently vouched for in the end, you'd be tempted to interpret her as the fantasy projection of a man who has had to watch too much sex in coldly anatomical terms and who is over-compensating with a daydream woman who can see entire CVs in the sex act. "Could you tell that man's previous girlfriend was Asian and that the woman was brought up in care?" Easy-peasy, I'm sure, if you know what you're looking for.

On the same bill as *The Censor* is Robert Young's *Surfing*, a funny and mounting touching piece about a young jilted woman who, messing around with her ex-lover's computer, stumbles accidentally upon, and then into, his E-mail correspondence with another female friend. Pretending to be him, she starts communicating via the Internet with this unknown quantity and is eventually drawn into collaborating on erotic fantasy stories. This virtual relationship develops into an intuitively quasi-lesbian romance which, though the pair never meet, survives the discovery that neither is what the other believed. In Lisa Gold-man's staging, Lizzie McPhee plays both, skilfully shifting between eager northern openness and the refined beatitude of maturity on a computer-screen set that resembles a dinky swimming pool.

To 26 April: *Surfing* 7pm, *The Censor* 8.30pm, Finborough Arts, 118 Finborough Rd, London SW10 (0171-2871231)

Paul Taylor

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The price of tobacco

Stephen Howe asks if Britain boomed on the backs of slaves

The Making of New World Slavery: from the Baroque to the Modern, 1492-1800 by Robin Blackburn, Verso, £25

Slavery remains more ubiquitous in memory and culture than any other historical crime or tragedy. In recent weeks, we have seen Bernie Grant MP making passionate calls for the site of a slave ship's wreck to be made a national memorial and linking this discovery to his campaign for slaves' descendants to be paid reparations. Jazz trumpeter Wynton Marsalis has just given the London premiere of *Blood on the Fields*, a musical history of slavery in the US. The flow of imaginative treatments ranges from Alex Haley's *Roots* and its influential TV adaptation to novels by Toni Morrison and Caryl Phillips. Only the Holocaust, which still remains within living memory, arouses such deep emotion.

It is a particular kind of slavery that continues to haunt us: the enslavement of Africans by Europeans in the New World between the 15th and 19th centuries. Almost all societies have at some time had some form of slavery. The greatest overview, Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death*, enumerates more than 100 polities, ancient and modern, that were decisively dependent on it. New World slavery and the transatlantic trade that fed it, though, were unique in their scale and probably their harshness. They were intertwined with racial ideologies that still poison every society they affected. And they transformed four continents—North and South America, Africa and Europe—as a central part of the birth of the modern world.

Yet this vast theme has not, for decades, had a comprehensive treatment. Nearly all modern research deals with particular slave societies—above all the southern US. Almost no one has had the skills or nerve to survey the entire, ocean-wide, centuries-long process, treating the English, French, Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish and other Atlantic slave systems together. Robin Blackburn's book triumphantly fills this gap. He has been working backwards: in his 1988 book *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, he surveyed the end of the British, French and Spanish slave systems. Now he delves back to their birth.

The breadth of knowledge this requires is intimidating enough. Yet more difficult is the question of tone. Much of the cultural afterlife of slavery involves the kind of emotio-laden "memory" which is at odds with accurate reconstruction. The uneasy hybridity between history and fiction in Haley's *Roots* or (on a higher level) Morrison's *Beloved* is symptomatic. Slavery intersects with various bitter contemporary disputes, especially in the US. Foolish and sometimes repugnant controversies have ensued over issues such as the role of Jews in the slave trade—in reality, minuscule. So have wild claims about numbers, with some African-American writers asserting that 200 million Africans were enslaved or killed and that any lower estimate is a racist evasion. (As if the real total of 12 to 15 million victims were not terrible enough.)



Slaves in Portuguese East Africa, drawn by Sir John Willoughby in 'The Graphic' MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Leaving such excesses aside, a division has opened between those who stress the sadism and suffering of Atlantic slavery, and those who emphasise the trade's careful business rationality. The story of slavery from one aspect resembles that of Auschwitz: from another, it is part of the history of entrepreneurship.

Blackburn handles all this coolly. There is no downplaying of the horrors, but there is none of the didacticism—and little of the Marxism—one might expect from the editor of *New Left Review*. His most important and disturbing argument is that the evils of slavery were not mainly produced by state action, but by a mass of individual decisions. Although some Europeans condemned the enslavement of Africans from the start, remarkably few of those involved seem to have had moral qualms.

Blackburn traces not only the way the trade developed, but the ideologies that justified it. This involves one of history's great chicken-and-egg questions. Did European beliefs in Africans' natural inferiority arise to legitimate enslavement, or was slavery made possible by prior racist

ideas? He rejects an either/or answer, but underlines that both anti-black prejudices and supposed biblical justifications for slavery long preceded the Atlantic trade.

Such views were always contested. Blackburn therefore adds another disconcerting reflection: that slavery was avoidable. Both economic alternatives to its spread and moral critiques of its injustice were fully available at the time it became most extensive and brutal. New World slavery was central to the development of global modernity, but it need not have been so.

Slavery was, he believes, crucial to the emergence of modern capitalism as well. Economic historians have tended to suggest that slavery and colonialism were marginal to Britain's 18th-century prosperity and the Industrial Revolution, but Blackburn strongly argues that British industrialisation was decisively advanced by the exploitation of slave labour. So it might be thought a kind of poetic justice that many of the trade's products—tobacco, sugar, rum—damaged the health of European consumers even as they destroyed the lives of African producers.

Middle England's family plot

Patrick Gale hears skeletons rattle as closet doors creak open

In a Land of Plenty by Tim Fears, Doubleday, £16.99

Tim Fears made his striking debut with *In the Place of Fallen Leaves*, an evocation of a pastoral girlhood almost Proustian in its fine detail. In *a Land of Plenty* displays a similar balance of historical and psychological clarity against nostalgia. The purpose now is larger, however—a state-of-the-nation novel, no less.

He begins in 1952, when Philistine industrialist Charles Freeman woos, beds and weds Mary, an unworshipful poet. Charles grows ever fatter and richer, Mary ever more *disgrace* and alienated. They have four children. Simon is his father in duplicate, or at least seems that way as he follows him into the swelling family business. James rebels and becomes a reclusive photographer. Simon dabbles in used cars and hobnobs with their town's criminal fraternity. Alice betrays her early academic promise, dwindling into self-satisfied marriage to a local property magnate. By the novel's close, most have survived the Eighties, but suicide, murder, madness and market forces have polished off the rest.

Fears is wilfully schematic, his purpose broadly signposted. The novel is set in an imaginary heart-of-England city in an archetypal "big house on the hill" which comes to represent the characters' besieged ideals and hopes for a brighter future. The family Freeman—the name carries a whiff of allegory—is extended by marriage, love and kinship so as to encompass most aspects of late-20th-century Britain.

Alternative culture is vividly represented by cousin Zoe, the bookish hippy who ends up galvanising her grandmother's cinema as an artistic oasis, a thriving business and a focus for protest politics. Alice marries a brother's Pakistani classmate, who proceeds to exact a discreet economic revenge on the family that once snubbed him. She moves into the household of a lesbian friend from university, who tries to bully Simon out of his capacious closet. The cook's daughter is raised as Alice's sister, thus linking the family by marriage to the gardener's West Indian brother-in-law—and so on.

We encounter beatnik poetry, flower power, industrial action, the women's movement, Thatcherism, Greenham-style protest, foodism, a rave, drugs, voluntary single motherhood, alternative medicine, two recessions, a boom, a bankruptcy—even a character in a persistent vegetative state. This is a family to which everything happens. And why not? Cultural history is as good a motor as any for powering a family saga.

There is a faintly embarrassed pleasure in recognition—be it of one's child-

hood toys and preoccupations or of the past decade's posturing excess—but recent history is not an enthralling read. We know all its punch lines in advance. Schematic narratives are rarely exciting, since they discourage identification with the characters and hinder those characters' ability to develop with much verisimilitude.

Novelists' strengths are often best illustrated when they battle against such self-imposed restraints as a convoluted time scheme or an insensitive narrator. And Tim Fears's humanity is impressive. For him, 40 years of British history is little more than an unwieldy plot device. What plainly fascinates him, as with *In the Place of Fallen Leaves*, is the unpredictable dynamics of a family and the domesticated tyrannies that held it together while threatening to break its members' spirits. Terrible things happen, rifts are opened, blood is shed, but the family heals its wounds (or dangerously chooses to ignore them) and, hydra-like, grows new limbs.

Fears's political allegory is most successful in this area. It shows a family, like a nation, suffering blow after blow, surviving, because that is all families and nations can do, and with the passage of healing time, coming to refashion those blows as intimate folklore.

Charles Freeman is a wonderful creation, as memorable a monster as Nancy Mitford's version of Lord Redesdale. Huge in every sense, he cheerfully tramples on wife and children with a glass of claret in one hand and a chequebook in the other. His wife is a delight as well. A ravishingly beautiful manic depressive, she will smuggle the children out of school one day to enjoy an illicit seaside jaunt or to stand in the rain admiring rainbows, then retreat for days on end writing fevered poetry behind a locked door.

It is a pity that Fears does not lavish equal attention on each of the children. Evidently he was half-way into the Sixties when he realised economies would have to be imposed if the book was not to become a leviathan. We see nothing, therefore, of the thoughts of Robert, the dark destroyer of the piece, and Fears seems similarly fearful of entering the minds of Simon, the bluff, camp eccentric—who is played chiefly for laughs—or of Natalie the lodger, a stereotypical dyke.

The emotional and narrative weight comes to lie with James, not least because we know that something horrendous is going to befall him. His is the subtlest portrait because it makes no attempt to charm. It's an acute delineation of the dissatisfaction and insecurity to which so many middle children are heir, and a moving biography of an oddball not-quite-artist.

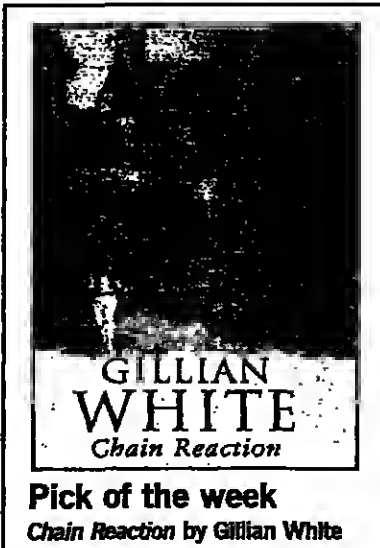
Independent choice: Fiction's coming home By Chris Savage King

Spring is heralded in publishing by an outbreak of novels with watercolour covers and mild titles. Their themes are downbeat: divorce; bed death; have we done the best thing for the children? Is that all there is? The implied effect is of a soothing pastille, but these products are not indistinguishable.

Gillian White's *Chain Reaction* (Orion, £16.99) is structured in segments, using the bright idea of a house-buyers' chain. Assorted locales and very different lives collide as everyone relocates. There's Irene, a feisty pensioner about to be turfed into an old people's home with the help of a daughter who talks like a government form. Joy and Vernon are pillars of neat Eighties aspiration, until one is driven to murder. The Middletons are an unassuming brood until their son is done on a trumped-up rape charge. In her anatomy of criminal injustice and media hysteria, White is impassioned, but never lets up on satire.

A bunch of aristocrats and their flunkies are juxtaposed with a vegetating rock star and his tough rock chick, Belle. *Chain Reaction* draws clever comparisons between status-led dynasties, and the culpability of new and old wealth. In her poignant and hilarious portrait of the adorable nitwit Arabella, and Janice the "subnormal" rape victim, White illustrates how irregularity is fiercely policed in the poor hut allowed to run free among the privileged.

She has a remarkable empathy with a rich cast of characters. Her broad but sure brushstrokes are stingingly accurate. Melodramatic, and with a generous sweep, *Chain Reaction* doesn't deserve its dreary cover: a Next Casuals woman walking away from a mansion. It's as if the publishers have acquired a bot property whose true worth is completely lost on them.



Pick of the week
Chain Reaction by Gillian White

Deborah Moggach's *Close Relations* (Heinemann, £15.99) focuses more traditionally on the middle classes in crisis. A formulaic tale of three sisters is given a brisk respray of modernity. So Dad gets beard trouble and responds by taking up with a young black nurse. Grandpa and grandson—with their new friends—bump into each other at The Fridge. Maggie, the tomboy of the trio, has a lesbian awakening, and the spinsters—backneyed archetype—gets her married lover's job.

Moggach is a capable example of English fine writing, if that's what you like. While she can achieve poetic resonance, her tendency is to pull herself together and trip along into a breezier style. She often reverts to shorthand: streets are like "a Frank Capra movie", a bumpy blacksmith is "Lawrentian", while the sisters—inevitably—are "Chekhovian".

For all the contemporary whizz, the novel's conclusion is strangely mid-fashioned. The women finish pretty well as they started, living in a Nineties commune. Most of the men are philandering scoundrels of caddish or "weak" hues. It's probably time for writers to come up with a new angle on the "all men are bastards" theme, beyond the adultery dirge.

Male domestic fiction comes in the form of Adrian Mowbray's *The Four of Us* (Hodder

& Stoughton, £17.99). The men in this novel are blustery and hesitant in the expression of their sexual urges. David, a kindly academic, is married to Helena—deeply into her children, and God, and with a fondness for Edwardian nightgowns. Enter the exuberant Millie, a mean wielder of an electric drill, and prone to hearty exclamations. She's the kind of mate in a skirt that a certain type of Englishman finds a merciful relief from the troubling mysteries of womanhood.

There's a bit of bed-hopping and some worrisome complications about careers and loyalties, but essentially this is a celebration of the good life, which remains so. It's a chamber piece, and the tone is autumnal. But Mowbray manages some nice epiphanies on nature and mortality.

A twilight love story set in an old people's home is certainly an unusual idea. This isn't the gruesome place Irene in *Chain Reaction* is headed for, though. In Zita Adamson's *Second Chances* (Sceptre, £17.99) The Pines is more like a hotel, with "a drawing-room rather than a TV lounge" and nice young women on hand to fix your hair.

Claire meets Peter. They go for walks, they go to a music festival. Romance blooms, sort of. Claire acts with all the tremulousness of an Anita Brookner heroine on tranquillisers. The fey snobbery and the strained gentility are flecked with unintentional humour: "He had nice teeth, she noticed. Straight and almost certainly his own."

Dictionaries of physical frailty, Claire and Peter have a miserable marriage apiece behind them; you cannot help but wish them well. But there comes a point when you also wonder if Zita Adamson has confused the evocation of tedium with the thing itself, and begin to ponder the futility of sentences that go: "It had rained the previous day as well as the day before that..."

Is there no end to laborious realism? Only Gillian White in *Chain Reaction* shows any awareness that novels should be about anything else except writing stuff down and giving it a shape. There is something doubtfully British about this spring collection. You don't enter a different dimension, you aren't transported, you aren't required to think—you just sit down and have a cup of tea and biscuits.

The brooder of suburbia

Michael Arditti sinks into an indigo mood

The title of a book may no more indicate its content than its cover. Yet by calling his first collection of short stories *Love in a Blue Time*, Hanif Kureishi appears to be mapping out a territory midway between *Love in the Time of Cholera* and *Love in a Cold Climate*—marrying Marquez's depiction of a decaying culture to Nancy Mitford's tart exploration of British mores.

Kureishi's eye for the zeitgeist is as sharp as ever (although his blind spot is an irritating tendency to define people by decades). With his finger on the pulse of society—and the rest of his hand on more intimate parts of the anatomy—he extends the themes of romantic, racial and cultural alienation familiar from his previous work. Three of the stories centre on Asian experience in post-war Britain, two of these on the mixed-race families familiar from *The Buddha of Suburbia*. "We're Not Jews" is a persuasive account of racism both overt and ingrained, and "With Your Tongue Down My Throat" a cross-cultural variant on the classic plot of twins divided at birth. The third story, "My Son the Fanatic", is a compelling portrait of a taxi-driver's despair as his son is lost to Islamic fundamentalism.

Faced with the boy's mindless attack on his Western values (symbolised by a fondness for pork pies), the father betrays his principles and fights back. Apart from "The Tale of the Turd", an Irvine Welsh-like scatological fantasy of disrupting a middle-class meal, the stories focus on male-female relationships. To judge by those depicted, the titular colour is not lapis lazuli but an inky blue-black. The gulf between the sexes is bridged only in the first story, "In a Blue Time", where Roy, a would-be film director, discards his adolescent

Love in a Blue Time by Hanif Kureishi, Faber & Faber, £8.99

self and accompanies his wife to an antenatal class. Other husbands casually hit their wives as they reach orgasm, work at nights to avoid them, cheat on them, or simply run off. Elsewhere, the inevitable death of passion compels a couple to commit their love-making to film.



Lord of the flyblown: Hanif Kureishi

The story which best epitomises the collection is "Nightlight", in which a man whose world is disintegrating has sex once a week in a basement with a woman he interviewed for a job. They meet without drink or music (always a vital force in Kureishi's world), barely able to see each other and never speaking each other's names. As soon as she leaves—in a cab she has kept waiting—he starts to masturbate.

This lack of connection is typical of Kureishi's protagonists. Several are unemployed, while able to afford a rich pharmaceutical life. Of those

in work, the majority are thirty-something media types at the bulkhead end of the artistic spectrum: commercials directors, TV scriptwriters, photographers. Their work is second-rate and second-hand: the director repackages Bergman or Fellini; the scriptwriter expropriates an Asian girl's experience; the photographer snaps the couple having sex. Only the drug dealers enjoy job satisfaction, making their deliveries as routinely as milkmen.

The most powerful expression of this spiritual malaise is the final story, "The Flies", an absurdist fable with shades of Sartre and Kafka that portrays the pestiferous forces of late-20th-century life and in particular the cloying commitments of marriage and domesticity, as a plague of ravaging insects. Otherwise, apart from an unnecessarily obfuscating narrator in "With Your Tongue Down My Throat", Kureishi eschews literary devices in favour of direct statement and uncluttered narrative. The result is prose which has immense immediacy but lacks resonance.

In one of his rare analytical passages, Kureishi comes close to encapsulating his theme when Laura, a disillusioned drummer, despairs of a London "full of drugged, useless people who didn't listen to one another but merely thought all the time of how to distract themselves".

With a disarmingly light touch, he highlights some of our major dilemmas: how to prevent our post-Sixties freedom degenerating into hedonism; how to maintain both our sense of ourselves and our commitment to others, and how to maintain personal and social morality without resorting to the fundamentalist fallacy. By his unliking, unblinkered witness, he makes a forceful contribution to our *fin-de-siècle* debate.

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Old mash or crisp fries? Oliver Taplin seeks the perfect recipe for serving up Homer's epic voyage to modern readers



Nausicaa, princess of the Phaeacians, who in Book VI of the *Odyssey* meets the shipwrecked Odysseus while doing the washing with her maids. She helps him, introduces him to her parents and even hopes to wed him – but he soon sets sail again
MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Tasting the tang of the surf

The *Odyssey* by Homer, translated by Robert Fagles, Viking, £25

Towards the close of Derek Walcott's poetic masterpiece *Omeros*, the spirit of Homer appears in the narrator and shows him the golf-course developers and their like tormented in the volcanic sulphur pits of St Lucia, like the damned souls in Dante's *Inferno*. The Walcott-narrator admits that he hasn't read the epics properly ("Forget the gods! Omeros growls, 'and read the rest'"), but then breaks into a muttered rhapsody: "When I was a boy/your name was as wide as a bay, as I walked along the curled brow of the surf ... Master, I was the freshest of all your readers."

That is the point: Homer always has fresh readers. Every generation needs a new translation, but these days one seems to come every five years. According to George Steiner, in his excellent Penguin anthology of *Homer in English*, there have been a dozen complete English Homers since the War.

Many of Homer's major translators have had a go at both epics, nearly always the *Iliad* first, and in nearly every case critics have rated the *Odyssey* less successful. Robert Fagles published his *Iliad* in 1990, yet this new *Odyssey* seems to me

to be remarkably consistent, not only in metre and tone, but also in its high quality. Like his *Iliad*, it comes in a beautifully produced hardback, with a superb introduction by Bernard Knox. It is marketed as the best thing since Alexander Pope sliced heroic couplets. So is it?

There is only one way, I think, to test a new translation, and that is to spot-check a single passage across a range of versions. This is admittedly like testing chefs by sampling a potato cooked by each – it may be unrepresentative, but it can be very revealing. I have plucked three lines from the scene where Phemius, the resident poet on Ithaca, has been singing about the troubles the Greeks have had getting home from Troy.

Penelope, whose husband has still, of course, not made it, is upset. She tells Phemius to choose something else from his repertoire. But the young Telemachus takes issue with his mother. His rebuke includes the three lines which, as literally as I can manage, say:

"It is no reason to be indignant with him that he sings of the bad fate of the Danaoi, because people always praise more whatever sung comes round its listeners as the newest."

The only translator I know who

produced an *Odyssey* radically different from his *Iliad* was the first. Robert Chapman's *Iliad* (1598-1611) is cast in massy, 14-syllable lines; his *Odyssey* (1614) is in much smoother, 10-syllable lines:

Nor is this man to blame that the repairs/
The Greeks make homeward sing, for his
fresh Muse/ Men still most celebrate that
sings most newes.

The word-order may be strained, but applying the potato test, I love the sense of a prolific vegetable never tasted before, straight from Sir Walter Raleigh's sea chest. The two Restoration versions by John Ogilby and Thomas "Leviathan" Hobbes were eclipsed by the scintillating *Iliad* of Pope (1715-20) – as Steiner rightly says, "Pope's main detractors have been those who have not read him". But Pope's *Odyssey* (1725) is a pot-boiler, and our sample caught him (or one of his assistants) on a bad day:

Nor blame sever his choice; Warbling the
Grecian woes with harp and voice/ For
novel lays attract our ravish'd ears/ But old,
the mind with instruction bears.

As well as the warbling harp, the inattentive line is mere padding to fill out the couplet. This dish may be served in the shape of a swan, but in fact it is made of old mash.

William Cowper produced his translation "into English Blank Verse" (1791) in reaction against the inventive artifice of Pope. Like a wholesome bread advert, Cowper claims "I have omitted nothing; I have invented nothing".

No fault is his, if the disastrous fate/ He
sings of the Achaeans, for the song/ Wins over
from the hearers most applause/ That has
been least in use.

That last, lame phrase is baked spud with no butter.

The 19th century, supposed to be the great age of classical education in Britain, produced no great Homers (though William Morris's *Odyssey* is not bad). The most telling turn was the highly popular *Odyssey* of Lang, Leaf and Myers (1882) – on the roll-call surnames. These are in the prose of the *Authorized Version*; Homer becomes an honorary member of the Established Church.

The reactions against this style in the first half of the 20th century were nearly all translations into plain adventure-ovel prose: WHD Rouse, IA Richards, TE Shaw (mainly initials, now).

All of these are, in their different ways, British institutional cook-

ing, whether clerical, military, parliamentary or academic, boiled until all the flavour is gone. The culmination is the best-selling Penguins of EV Rieu (1946-50), which now read like a contribution to the post-war ration-book economy:

We cannot blame Phemius if he chooses to sing of the Danaans' tragic fate, for it is always the latest song that an audience applauds the most.

Something worthy came, at last, from the US in the third quarter of the century. In the cootest between the long, careful lines of Richmond Lattimore and Robert Fitzgerald's pungent blank verse, many would agree with Steiner that Lattimore wins for the *Iliad*, which he translated first, while Fitzgerald's *Odyssey* (also done first) is triumphant. Lattimore has a certain lilt, like a touch of mint:

There is nothing wrong in his singing the
and return of the Danaans/ People, surely,
always give more applause to that song/
which is the latest to circulate among the
listeners.

But Fitzgerald is unbeatably crisp and vivid:

Here is no reason for reproach to sing the
news of the Danaans/ Men like best a song
that rings like morning on the air.

Lightly sautéed in fine olive oil, but with a truffle garnish. The morning simile is added, and is more Irish, perhaps, than Homeric.

Robert Fagles is from the same school as Lattimore and Fitzgerald – an Ivy-League professor who is also a poet. I think he is consciously concerned to be more easy-going than Lattimore, but more conscientious than Fitzgerald:

Why fault the bard if he sings of the
Argives' harsh fate? It's always the latest
song, the one that echoes last/ In the listen-
ers' ears, that people praise the most.

It's good. Making Telemachus's reproach into a question works well. It is the kind of stylistic turn that Fagles likes: the most obvious is his use of repetition, as in "nthers, so many nthers, died there too", a few lines after this passage.

The colloquialisms, such as "it's" and "people" are no problem in my ear, though "the latest song" may be a bit close to the cliché of "the latest hit". Pulling in the other direction are the slightly quaint touches such as "bard" or the plural "ears". And "that echoes last" is unhelpfully ambiguous. The metre is fluent and speakable, but tends to boil down to blank verse with the odd extra syllable to make it hop. Golden, crispy, low-fat fries?

So, perfectly good though it is, I am not clear that Fagles is my "best buy" rather than Walter Shewring, published in Oxford's Worlds Classics series in 1980. One reason why this translation has attracted less attention than it should is that it is printed as crowded prose on small pages with poor paper. Prose would seem to be a fundamental betrayal of Homer, but Shewring's is a crafted, musical, lustrous prose. Suppose that it came on fine paper and arranged in lines, like this:

If Phemius sings of the sorrows of the
Danaans/ that is in no way blameworthy for
men/ will applaud most eagerly whatever
song/ falls freshest on the listening ear.

The turns of phrase are deft: "sings of the sorrows", "applaud most eagerly", add, above all, "whatever song falls freshest" – so much more dewy than "the one that echoes last". I would give Shewring to the freshest of Homer's readers.

Fagles' translation puts me in mind of an executive juggling in Central Park. It is fit, fluent, confident, urbane – and routine. In the era of Harrison, Heaney and Walcott, I yearn for an *Odyssey* that paces – and sometimes runs – along an unspoiled sea shore by "the curled brow of the surf".

Sorted for whiz

Robert Crawford flies high with the Pope and the Crow

The *School Bag* edited by Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes, Faber & Faber, £20 hardback; £12.99 paperback

With its tangerine and blue cover, this anthology has an acid-housey look to it. "Expect raving poets," seems to be the message – "here be visions." On the whole, this is just what the book, a follow-up to Heaney and Hughes's 1982 gathering *The Rattle Bag*, delivers. Especially in its opening sections there is a constant sense of voyaging into the Other, of poetry as a powerful form of alien abduction.

The juxtaposition of poems encourages this luxurious light-headedness. So Marianne Moore's "A Grave", ending "neither with volition nor consciousness", tips the reader into the hallucinatory aquarium of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner". Poetry at school has seldom been so dangerous.

Some teachers, finding this volume in their pupils' schoolbags, may be a little bothered. It has scant introduction, and no contextual notes. It tells you the poet's name and the date of the poem, then lets you get on with things. Though there are significant groupings of poems in the anthology, dealing with such topics as love, nature, drink and loss, you have to work out what these groupings are because no signposts are given. What's here is just poetry – take it or leave it.

This is poetry the way poets like it. It isn't translated into explanation or weighed down by managerial prose. Like the ocean, it just is. So the reader has to navigate as well as he or she can among 600 pages of swirling waves set up by these two masters. The poems (only one by each poet) are set out in complete defiance of chronology and geography, so that part of the reading experience involves casting oneself on the waters, allowing oneself to go with the flow.

This is a fine experience for those with an inclination for poetry, but many pupils,

teachers and other readers may find themselves out of their depth. Being at sea is a good thing, and a powerfully educative experience. Yet it is the hardest thing to justify in terms of the National Curriculum. What is evident even in the book's title, and in Heaney's page-long foreword, is a tension between this book's function as an anthology for everyday use in schools ("Take out your books, class") and the sense in which it is an instrument for the schooling of poets ("Sing, Muse!").

The editors haven't sought to resolve that tension. This means that what they have produced looks in one way like a very old-fashioned schoolbook whose poets are occasionally elderly, but nearly always dead.

In another way, it looks like a wonderful text for an advanced creative writing class, where all the readers will respond to the stimulating imaginative patterns that Heaney and Hughes have set up. They rearrange and disrupt the canon so that the translated Gaelic of Cathal Buí Mac Gíolla Ghúna precedes the Scots of Burns's "Tam o' Shanter", and Ezra Pound meets the Great Silkie of Skye Skerrie. Whoopie!

This unresolved tension between poetry for schools and a school for poets makes it hard to see *The School Bag* taking over secondary classrooms. It is too quirky, and demands too much imaginative effort. Yet, if the test of a good anthology is the low number of duds it contains, then Hughes and Heaney score virtually 100 per cent. This is a very high-voltage book, crammed with poetic intensity, and edited with a flair that allows Dylan Thomas's "Fern Hill" to graze against Sorley MacLean's "Halcyon".

The presence of translated Gaelic, Old English and Welsh material alongside poems in Scots and in English from Britain, Ireland, America, Canada and Australasia (but not Africa or India) is richly revealing. There is still a sense of England as the principal wellspring, but

one that has been magnificently defiled and enhanced by other languages and other national traditions.

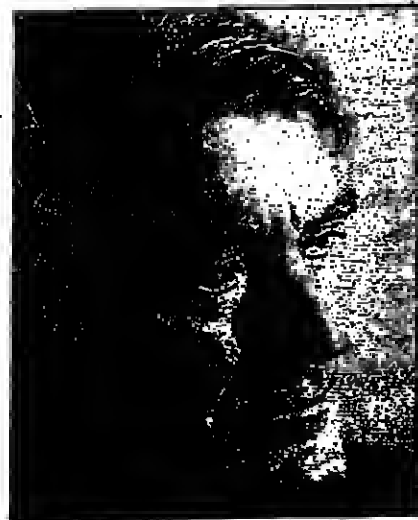
The graffiti of my mind tell me Hughes is a Satanic Majesty, the Bard of Crow, whose manners are tearing off heads; Heaney is Pope Seamus, making the sick while again with a benign yet demanding twinkle. Hughes's England is deep and pikey; Heaney's Ireland mixes bog and aerial shinnings. Yet each is a poet who has tried to remake himself, and who has kept up a sense of poetry as an exploratory medium. A sense of energetic and continual realignment permeates this book, creating something of a daze in the reader, but a good, vatic daze.

Nationality and chronology blur as Alexander Pope is followed by John Berryman, yet throughout one is aware both of nations and of castings adrift from them. The Poet Laureate's sense of the sea-girt isle meets the corracing imagination of the Irish bard.

Hardly any other anthology can be trusted to deliver the poetic goods as reliably or as riskily as this one. Yes, the editors were right to include William McGonagall's immortal poem about "the Railway Bridge of the Silvery Lye"; yes, they were right to juxtapose the erotic cascades of Hopkins's "Inversnaid" with Spenser's more stately and licit "Prothalamion". But surely the version of "Sir Patrick Spens" they chose, with the King "drinking at the wine", lacks the potency of the version that Robert Frost loved, in which "The King sits in Dunfermline town, Drinking the blude-red wine".

I missed the presence of Les Murray, of Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. I wondered if poetry was quite as un-urban as this book would suggest. I'd have liked some poets under the age of 70.

Ultimately, though, anthologies should be judged more by their contents than by their exclusions. Heady, visionary, and voyaging, this one is a winner. But it's for the ocean voyage, not for the classroom.



The graffiti of my mind tell me that Hughes is a Satanic Majesty ...



... and Heaney is Pope Seamus, making the sick whole again



Hornet's Nest

SUMMERTIME AND THE VIOLENCE IS SWARMING

"Gripping plot, great characters and ironic humour"
Casmopolitan

Paperbacks

By Emma Hagestadt and Boyd Tonkin

Becoming a Mother by Kate Mosse (Virago, £7.99). Pregnant women are suckers when it comes to BabyLit, consuming the Boots mother and baby catalogue with a seriousness usually reserved for Melanie Klein. This series of anecdotes on the pregnant state, largely compiled from the tea tables of south-east London, shows its author no better informed than your average NCT-card-holding mum. Not that this will put readers off: sensible advice on pain relief, midwives and Vitamin K is interspersed with tips on surviving hospital cuisine (Marmite sandwiches under the bed) and marital breakdown (ditto). As Kate Mosse braves the choppy waters of the birthing-pool with Lee, Fran and Sasha, first-time mums be warned. These "real life" birth stories (like epidurals and new slippers) only really make sense when it's all too late.

Debrett's Wedding Guide, The Planning and Etiquette of a Modern Wedding by Jacqueline Llewellyn-Bowen (Headline, £8.99). From the ermine-clad folk at Debrett's, some surprisingly down-to-earth advice on planning for the Big Day. Good food, good drink, and chairs for the grannies. YES. Heart-shaped canapés, artificial flowers and receiving

lines: NO. Wedding organiser Llewellyn-Bowen gets to grips with wedding announcements (how to style divorced, widowed and separated parents), seating plans (where to put great-aunt Effie) and the horrors of the free-wheeling cherry tomato. Sections on civil weddings, Jewish weddings and male members (ie ushers) make this book as useful for couples planning a small reception as for those intent on a *Hello!* centrefold spread.

Dirty Tricks by Michael Dibdin (Faber, £5.99). Karen Parsons lives out by the Oxford ring road and listens to Richard Claydman records. Alison Kraemer sings in a madrigal group and owns a house in the Dordogne. The novel's narrator, a deliciously nasty EFL teacher, lives in Botley and ends up poking them both. Michael Dibdin's reissued Oxford thriller may feature a traditional cast of OUP editors, waspish dons and precocious schoolgirls, but owes more to Martin Amis than Colin Dexter. As the social climbing and dinner parties get out of hand, so do the plotting accidents and trips to dodgy meat houses. Funny and readable, Dibdin traces the road from the "arctic wastes" of Kidlington to the bosky reaches of the Banbury road with enviable precision.

Odd Man Out by Martyn Harris (Pavilion, £12.99). If the pious notion of "collected journalism" sticks in the craw (it would have done for Martyn Harris), make an exception for this scintillating mix of articles. A graduate of Paul Barker's *New Society* - that nursery for first-class troublemakers - Harris took his genius for slaying sacred cows to the *Telegraph*. In that unlikely home, he flourished. Splendidly acerbic features, columns and profiles (eg a notorious set-to with Lauren Bacall) give way, in a shocking shift of gear, to bulletins on his cancer and chemotherapy. The wit, the clarity, the hatred of hype or gush survive; the emotions deepen as "the gossamer stuff of ambition and money and possessions falls away". Martyn Harris died last October; he never wrote a dull sentence, or a dishonest one.

The BBC News General Election Guide edited by Richard Bailey (HarperCollins, £5.99). Why not boycott TV and radio and read this lucid primer by Auntie's finest (Snow, Oakley, Jay et al)? Facts, figures, all The Ishoos and some damn fine trivia: in Cambridgeshire South, the presenter of *One Man and His Dog* stands for the Referendum Party. Did someone mention Barking (Labour majority 7,180)?

in the same way. "But bow can Heisenberg be so sure about his uncertainty principle?" runs one aside. It's a more demanding listen than the others, but worth the effort to acquire a crude mental map of how Foucault and Fukuyama, cyberspace and counterfeits culture, relate. Don't despair if you think it's all meaningless twaddle, because the tape is sealed with a kiss. It concludes: "The only cure for Postmodernism is the incurable illness of romanticism".

Christina Hardyment

Blues in rhapsody

Roz Kaveney discovers the quiet genius of jazz whose work put Duke Ellington in the limelight

Lush Life: a biography of Billy Strayhorn by David Hajdu, Granta, £16.99

Some make pacts with the devil and some of us make pacts with our friends; it is not clear which is the more destructive. No one, least of all Duke Ellington, ever wished Billy Strayhorn any harm. Ellington was a substitute for Strayhorn's inadequate bully of a father. He took the talented young composer and arranger as an extra son. Yet Strayhorn is hardly remembered, save for one song - much of his best work is misremembered as Ellington's. Now Ellington was a giant, and even the people they love most get hidden by giants' shadows. David Hajdu's biography succeeds in rescuing Billy Strayhorn from mild obscurity, but Ellington - the patriarch Ellington with the raffishness of the Cotton Club in Harlem behind him - looks over the book, colossally.

Jazz is a collaborative enterprise, to be sure, but there are people with talent, and people with talent and charisma, too. For black jazz to be recognised as art in racist American society, it had to become a commodity as well. America values what is paid for. So jazz needed salesmen.

Ellington was a salesman of genius and his inspiration never ran dry for long. Strayhorn was not the only talented person to find himself circling Ellington, never quite able to escape. He was, however, perhaps the most talented, the one who might have been something else.

Strayhorn was a bright Pittsburgh kid with talent and a term of music school; he had written a Gershwin-plus-Strauss concerto for piano and wind, and then reflected that perhaps the world was not crying out for a black working-class composer



Billy Holiday records 'Strange Fruit' in 1939. She and Ellington feature in Michael Denning's rich history of radical US art and showbiz in the New Deal years, 'The Cultural Front' (Verso, £20)

of art music. He was a virtuoso of quiet piano jazz; a friend got him to play for Ellington, who hired him on the spot as the reflective, sensitive other self that he needed in order to refresh long-standing material.

On his way to Harlem, Strayhorn took Ellington's written directions and turned them into the song that perhaps above all defines their collaboration: "Take The 'A' Train" - that greatest anthem of being young and ambitious in New York. (Hajdu is a quiet and non-directive biographer, whose selection and emphasis of the facts is far more telling than Mailer'sque rants).

In his late teens, Strayhorn had composed his other most memorable song, a song of disillusion and stoically accepted grief. Either he had known bitterness young, or had understood what it was. "Lush Life" was the one project so personal that Ellington never trespassed on it. When, as a man of 21, you have written, and plan- gently set, words like "Romance is music/Suffering those who strive/I'll live a lush life in some small dive/And there I'll be while I rot", the prognos-

is for real happiness and permanent exhilaration is not good. Part of what Strayhorn gave to Ellington, and thus to the jazz of the Forties and Fifties, was precisely a sense of melancholy more urban and urbane than the blues, but no less authentic.

Billy Strayhorn was openly and proudly gay in a period where medical and popular opinion were united in the assumption that to be gay was to be miserable and doomed to suicide or early death. Part of what made him Ellington's willing servant was the fact that the ebulliently heterosexual Ellington was sufficiently worldly wise to have no prejudices in the matter whatever. The shadow of Ellington was a safe space for Strayhorn, where he could have approval without discretion or compromise. Most of the time this led him to put up with being a worker for hire, whose treatment over copyrights was not always all it might have been.

Strayhorn did have a life away from Ellington and Ellingtoniana. He had affairs, an intense friendship with Lena Horne, a circle of hard-drinking gay friends and a club of

black musicians and dancers, the Copacetic, for whose annual reviews he wrote most of the music. He was, like Ellington, a quietly tireless fundraiser for the nascent civil rights movement. If he was, much of the time, gloomy, perhaps some people just do not have a special gift for happiness.

In his early fifties, in 1965, after a painful and humiliating illness borne with rage and regret and no patience at all, Strayhorn died of cancer and was much mourned. Ellington went on to even greater triumphs and respectability. If at times he smothered Strayhorn's individual creativity, it was because of that greed for more that comes with genius.

The triumph of Hajdu's biography is to show us this working relationship in terms that make clear that the two men had a friendship and working relationship that transcends easy revisionist cant about parasitism or plagiarism. Ellington's theatrical grief was neither hypocritical nor time-serving. It was the grief of a man in this, as in much else, too big to judge.

Audiobooks



Producer Julian Hale uses the two-hour, two-cassette set in a highly creative way in dramatising Iain's popular *Beginners' introductions to key figures and big issues. Each of the first three titles -*

Buddhism For Beginners (with Saeed Jaffrey), **Jung For Beginners** (with Simon Callow) and **Machiavelli For Beginners** (with Derek Jacobi); all Icon Audio, £9.99 - is a compelling mix of biography, assessment, explanation and extracts.

But the real test comes with **Postmodernism For Beginners** (with Richard Appignanesi). "You have to be willing to join in the game," Michele Roberts says of the Postmodern novel. "Have your hand grabbed, be dragged into the maze, relax, tango, and be tickled." The tape, arch and ironical, works

in the same way. "But bow can Heisenberg be so sure about his uncertainty principle?" runs one aside. It's a more demanding listen than the others, but worth the effort to acquire a crude mental map of how Foucault and Fukuyama, cyberspace and counterfeits culture, relate. Don't despair if you think it's all meaningless twaddle, because the tape is sealed with a kiss. It concludes: "The only cure for Postmodernism is the incurable illness of romanticism".

Christina Hardyment

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Montreuil A delightful fortified town and the inspiration for Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. There is a charming market square, restaurants and small shops. **Hauts de Montreuil** The oldest inn in Montreuil. It has a restaurant and bar, wine cellars and cheese caves. Most rooms are in a new annex. Category B. Extra night £22pp. Not available: 11-12, 24-29/4, 17-18, 23-25/5, 30/6, 4-5/7, 25-27/7, 1-3/8.

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المجلة من الأصيل

The glistening bank

Diane Coyle on fat cats in lean times

Masters of Illusion: the World Bank and the poverty of nations by Catherine Caulfield, Macmillan, £20

The cocktail party that marks the start of the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund is one of the most arresting spectacles I have ever seen. You walk from the nearest Metro station in filthy, sticky Washington DC, past a stretch limo jam to the Sheraton Hotel. A tide of dignitaries waits for you down long corridors and up an escalator that feeds on to a landing above the hotel's ballroom. The gilded aircraft hangar below is packed with the global representatives of money and power, drifting in a sort of jostling Brownian motion with glass in one hand and canapés in the other. This opulent celebration has, apparently, been cut back in an austerity drive. The ice sculptures and champagne have been axed.

The contrast between the glossy wealth of the World Bank and the poverty of its clients in the world's poorest countries has become a cliché. The uproar among staff over the ban on flying first class and staying in five-star hotels is well known – so passé that the bank's Jewish president, James Wolfensohn, is seeking to increase spending on staff and administration again.

Its luxury is one of many things the World Bank can be criticised for, and this book by the campaigning journalist Catherine Caulfield lists pretty much every one in damning detail. Two, in particular, condemn the bank on its own terms. First, in the half-century since the Second World War, only one country – South Korea – has "graduated" from the World Bank. Every other one of its clients still borrows money, and has not yet grown rich enough to become a lender.

Secondly, at the end of the Eighties a study by Unicef found that in more than half the countries adjusting economic policies to qualify for World Bank loans, the amount of food per person had fallen. Patently, the bank has not vanquished poverty.

The strength of this book is that it puts this failure into historical context. The World Bank was the child of two economists, the American Harry Dexter White and the British John Maynard Keynes, and their fervent good intentions to construct a new post-war economic system. The institution has scarcely changed, making it a throwback to a discredited corporatism. At its best, it is paternalistic; at worst, bureaucratic and corrupt. The most telling sign of paternalism is the phrase bank staff have for visiting one of their client countries. They go "on mission". Like all missionaries, they

have faith in their beliefs and in their superiority.

These beliefs changed dramatically with the Reagan era. President Reagan's budget director, David Stockman, described the Bank as "infested with socialist error" – a phrase that recalls White's destruction by the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1948. As payer of the piper, the Reagan administration converted the bank to an ardent version of free-market economics. This has created the paradox of a bureaucratic behemoth, funded by government, preaching private enterprise.

The ideology has made the bank more overtly political than ever. Its loans require borrowers to adopt Reaganomics or Thatcherism – deregulation, privatisation, abolition of social protections. As free market swept the Washington HQ, the vice-president, Shahid Husain, admitted: "These loans do go to the heart of the political management of an economy." An adviser to the Indian government described Bank staff as the "new maharajas".

Caulfield, like many progressive critics of the World Bank, objects to its insistence – as one of the world's most bloated bureaucracies – on converting other countries to an extreme market capitalism that its shareholders have failed to implement themselves. But she has no prescription for what the bank should do instead. Some critics, like the charities and lobby groups in the "50 Years is Enough" campaign, would like to shut it down. Others still want to see an institution which channels cheap loans from the rich to the poor.

As the critical debate rages, the bank has perhaps found the way forward at last. Without abandoning the free market, James Wolfensohn has begun to emphasise the importance of good government and sound legal systems, the need to stamp out corruption, the importance of educating women, and of small-scale local projects rather than new dams.

There are circumstances where large, cheap loans have worked, have lifted peoples out of poverty and set them on the path of development. Marshall Aid, after the war, succeeded in rebuilding western Europe. By contrast, European Union aid to Italy's southern Mezzogiorno has scarcely improved the region's standard of living or its economic viability. Financial capital does not work unless it builds on social capital – or "trust", as Francis Fukuyama would put it.

Wolfensohn is right to emphasise the social and political construction that must precede economic development. He has little choice. The World Bank has tried pretty much everything else.



NAIL A MOTTO over the sty of your bed, from getting confirmed until pegging out in the paradise beyond: 'Men are Swine'. George Grosz stayed true to his motto – from a 1918 letter to Otto Schmalhausen – when painting 'Circle' in the Weimar Germany of 1927. It appears in Frank Whitford's 'The Berlin of George Grosz' (Vale, £35), which accompanies the exhibition of drawings, watercolours and prints at the Royal Academy until 8 June

A week in books
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

This epistle is faxed from Thessalonika. But reversing St Paul can't compare with the fantastical April Fool's Day joke that took place here on Tuesday: 32 writers from all over Europe converged on the City of Culture 1997 to speak, for 15 minutes each, on Arthur Jooz Arens, the 19th-century writer and defiant thinker.

Never heard of him? So defiant was this man, he never existed, save in the imagination of the City of Culture's literary committee, who supplied us with a preposterous CV in advance. In a vast and crowded university auditorium, we battled it out. I battled for Britain, with deadpan translations booming in my ear through equipment so antique, St Paul might have used it.

Just by turning up, we were all colluding in the joke. For instance: every symposium must have its highly strung female English novelist, watching with an ironic eye. (My story about Arens's illegitimate daughter was less vital.)

The day started with a hoax row during the pompous opening speeches, as the organiser called on the artistic director to resign. There were many such staged interventions. When a drunken student vociferously complained that he had learnt nothing about Arens, I was convinced he was bogus – but then assured that he was genuine. I'm still not certain.

For the professional surrealists, it was all in a day's work. Less overtly bizarre contributions were more subversive. Was the solemn German merely doing his set exercise seriously, or was he brilliantly acting the earnest, nit-picking German? Likewise the professor of psychology who delivered a Freudian analysis of a non-existent text, all sticky-up hair and staring eyes. "He's like that all the time," one person said. "It was a great performance," said another.

Arens had the last laugh. When, at the end of the longest April Fool in my life, we toasted him in ouzo, I still didn't know why the event had been organised. Or why I had eagerly taken part. Deadpan and booming, it was all Greek to me.

Charlotte Cory

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Rare sheep are chic19

The young Ernesto Guevara was footloose and fancied free travel. Simon Calder introduces an extract from a new biography of Che

There he is, that familiar figure gazing out heroically from beneath his trademark beret in the general direction of immortality. "Hasta la Victoria Siempre" reads the equally familiar slogan. "Always towards victory". You don't have to be dead to be a Cuban hero, but it helps. Fidel Castro, living proof of the triumph of ideological optimism over grim reality, gets only two graven images on the entire island. In contrast, Ernesto "Che" Guevara is everywhere, as much a part of Cuba's political scenery as the face of José Martí, the father of Cuban independence.

Cuban history has absolved him. Yet Che was never the son, prodigal or otherwise, of his adopted nation. He was an Argentinian cousin, often distant, who served his revolutionary apprenticeship on the high roads and in the low dives of Latin America – a rebel with a cause.

The catalyst for his first great expedition may have been his sweetheart "Chichina" – María del Carmen Ferrer. A beautiful heiress, she had refused his proposal of marriage and the promise of a trip around South America. Instead, the 23-year-old Ernesto set off with a close friend, Alberto Granado, six years his senior. Their transport was La Poderosa ("the powerful one"), Alberto's nickname for his doddery old 500cc Norton motorcycle.

On 14 January 1952 they embarked from the beach resort of Miramar on a journey that was to be far from heroic. Ernesto's father, Guevara Lynch, provided a revolver that was to prove an unhappy introduction to ballistics. As this extract from a monumental new biography (reviewed below) shows, the two travellers veered between feckless guile and reckless guilt on their rampage around the continent. Part of this adventure is chronicled in Che's own journal, *Notas de Viaje*. But his biographer, Jon Lee Anderson, also spent three months in Argentina in 1994, much of it in the company of Che's travelling companion, Alberto.

In death, the name of Che – like that of Christ – has been invoked to serve a multitude of motives. However, Anderson says, "My sole loyalty in this book is to Che Guevara himself; to write what I perceive to be his truth, not anyone else's."



In the footsteps of Che: Ernesto Guevara piled South America in his pre-revolutionary days

The wandering hero

Che's long and winding road to revolution. By Jon Lee Anderson

The road was clear to begin their great trek, and the two gypsies sped off. It took them four more weeks, however, to leave Argentina. Before they were halfway across the settled pampa west of Bahía Blanca, Ernesto succumbed to fever and had to be hospitalised for several days; then they returned to the dust and pound of the trail.

By the time they reached the picturesque Lake District in the forested eastern slopes of the Andean cordillera, bordering Chile, their meagre revenues had dwindled, and the two were becoming expert freeloaders, or *mangueros motorizados* (motorised scroungers), as Ernesto wryly defined it. It became a contest between Ernesto and Alberto to see who could outdo the other in the art of grubbing for survival.

Sometimes, rejected by their prospective hosts, they were forced to pitch their tent. But more often than not, they were successful, finding floor space for their cots in garages, kitchens, barns, and frequently police stations, where they shared cells and meals with an interesting variety of criminals.

Staying for a night in the barn of an Austrian family, Ernesto awoke to hear scratching and growling at the barn door, and saw a pair of glowing eyes peering in. Having been warned about the fierce local "Chilean pumas" he aimed the Smith & Wesson that Guevara

Lynch had given him to take on the journey and fired a single shot. The noises stopped, and he went back to sleep. But in the morning he and Alberto awoke to discover that Ernesto had begged not a puma, but their hosts' beloved Alsatian dog, Bobby. The two escaped, pushing La Poderosa downhill – for she wouldn't start – followed by their hosts' walls, imprecations, and insults.

In the Lake District, they hiked around lakes, climbed a peak – scaring themselves by nearly falling

to their deaths – and used Guevara Lynch's revolver to poach a wild duck. At one particularly scenic lakeside spot they fantasised about returning together to set up a medical research centre.

Back in Bariloche after their jaunt, Ernesto opened a letter from Chichina informing him that she had decided not to wait for him. Outside, a storm raged. "I read and reread the incredible letter. Just like that, all [my] dreams... came crashing down... I began to feel afraid for myself and began to

write a weepy letter, but I couldn't, it was useless to try." Outwardly reconciling himself to his loss, Ernesto was determined to enjoy the rest of the journey. Writing about their crossing of the Andes to Chile, Ernesto invoked the lines of a poem that began: "And now I feel my great root floating naked and free..."

Entering Chile, they obtained free passage on a ferry across Lake Esmeralda by manning the bilge pumps of the leaky cargo barge it pulled. Aboard, they met some

Chilean doctors, to whom Ernesto and Alberto introduced themselves as "leprologists". The glib Chileans told them of the Pacific territory of Easter Island, Rapa Nui, where Chile's only leper colony existed alongside herds of sensuous, pliant women. Hearing this, Ernesto and Alberto immediately extracted a letter of recommendation from their new friends for the "Society of Friends of Easter Island" in Valparaíso, where they might secure free ship passages to the island. By the time they reached dry land, they had resolved to add this exotic new destination to their ambitious itinerary.

Their next stop was the Pacific port of Valdivia, where they paid a visit to the local newspaper, the *Correo de Valdivia*, and came away with a glowing profile of themselves, published under the headline "Two dedicated Argentine travellers on motorcycle on their way through Valdivia". Not ones to miss a good opportunity, Ernesto and Alberto had solemnly reinvented themselves as "leprosy experts", with "previous research in neighbouring countries" – and the unsuspecting *Correo* reprinted their claims. In addition to leprology, Ernesto and Alberto must have given free rein to their judgments on a wide variety of topics, for the *Correo* went on to laud them for having, "during their very short stay in our country, penetrated its social, economic and



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Portrait of the martyr as a young man

Ian Thomson charts Che's progress from playboy to executioner

In the 1960s Che Guevara's bearded face appeared on more student bedsit walls than damp stains or Jimi Hendrix. The famous photograph of saintly eyes and straggly black hair was taken in Havana 14 months after the Revolution. It was March 1960. Che had been standing on a balcony, half obscured by Castro's bulk, when he moved into a journalist's lens. An Argentine of Spanish ancestry, Che became an icon in the West like Warhol's Monroe. Cubans nicknamed him Che – "mate" – after his comradely leadership.

Ernesto Guevara (de la Serna) devoted 11 years of his brief life to Fidel's Revolution. Even in death there was a sainted air to his appearance. After he was executed by the military in a remote Bolivian schoolroom on 9 October 1967, the nurse who washed Che's corpse and the nuns at the hospital where his body was displayed kept locks of his hair. They said he

resembled Jesus Christ. The Bolivian High Command wanted to obliterate every trace of the freedom fighter: before two days were out, all that remained to be seen of him were his severed hands, stoppered in formaldehyde for fingerprint identification.

The location of Che's grave in Bolivia was revealed by Jon Lee Anderson in 1995 during his research for this diligent biography. Anderson is a *Time* magazine journalist and his determination to interview all who knew Che is admirable. He spoke to Che's widow, Aleida March; to the rebel's final interrogator, the CIA stooge Felix Rodríguez (who embraced Che after communicating his death sentence), and to the Bolivian army sergeant who volunteered to execute him. Disguising his identity from Fidel's assassins with a variety of wigs, Mario Terrán repeats

Che's last words: "I know you've come to kill me. Shoot, coward, you are only going to kill a man."

Thirty years after his death, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* gives an admirably balanced account of the Argentine adventurer, his real achievements and glamorous Robin Hood appeal.

Obsessed with finding a cure for his chronic asthma, Guevara took a medical degree at Buenos Aires in 1953. He wanted to remedy the social injustice of South America – at first through preventative medicine, later through armed insurrection.

Che could be ruthless. During the long guerilla war in Cuba, he personally killed the first traitor of the revolution. "I ended the problem by giving him a shot with a .32 pistol in the right side of his brain..." Still unpublished, Che's private diary reveals a chilling detachment from violence. In 1959, after Fidel's victory, Guevara oversaw an estimated 550 executions in Havana. Che's father, an

Argentine tea planter, remarked that "Ernesto had brutalised his own sensitivities".

It was not always so. In 1952 Guevara had travelled round South America on a motorbike, gallivanting like a beatnik down Peru's desert Pacific coast and up to the ruins of Machu Picchu and staying as a guest of the President of Ecuador. A middle-class Argentine with little interest in politics, then he preferred to sleep with the family maids.

As a doctor in the backwoods of Guatemala three years later, Guevara was introduced to leftists opposed to the regime funded by United Fruit – the company which had made of neighbouring Honduras the original "banana republic". This was a crucial encounter, encouraging Guevara's loathing for Uncle Sam and his eventual conversion to Marxism.

Guevara was the only non-Cuban aboard the *Granma*, the cabin cruiser that ferried 82 revo-

lutionary patriots, led by Fidel, from Mexico to Cuba in 1956. The Cuban revolution was not communist but nationalist in inspiration. After Batista's thuggish regime had been overthrown and Che made director of the Cuban national bank, he retained his combat fatigues and black beret, mindful of his proletarian image. He was a very different revolutionary to the Fidelistas. While Castro was the paunchy epicure with a relish for pasta con vongole, in later years Che didn't dance or drink.

His passion was for chess and mathematics. A literate man, he had an acidic sense of humour and the adventurer's contempt for bureaucracy. Unhappy with the course of Fidel's reforms – too much paperwork – Che left Cuba in 1965 to champion other revolutionary causes in Zaire and Bolivia.

Anderson proves conclusively that Fidel sent Che Guevara (already the father of five children)

to Bolivia in the spring of 1966. The decision eventually led to Che's death at the age of 39 during a half-baked guerilla insurrection.

Tied up like an animal in the Bolivian schoolroom, Che was didactic to the end. Motioning to a grammatical error on the blackboard, he told a frightened teacher that her school was a disgrace. If the rest of Che's life was a glamorous failure, he had at least helped to eradicate Cuba's illiteracy.

Occasionally Anderson's prose is clumsy ("Buenos Aires now had a melting pot's combustible, passionate quality") and he quotes too liberally from Che's own guerilla manuals, which are not scintillating. But *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* is an excellent guide to the myth behind the martyr.

Were he alive today, Ernesto Guevara de la Serna would be approaching 70. He died with his boots on, caught in full stride as he would have wanted.

Extra time in Arsenal

Sue Wheat goes on location for the real story behind her film debut in 'Fever Pitch'

When you've had a part in a film, you get an affinity for the location. I wangled a part in *Fever Pitch* - the film of Nick Hornby's book about Arsenal supporter Paul, who lives his life through football, and his girlfriend Sarah, who definitely doesn't see the attraction of North London's finest. It wasn't a starring role: you can just see the back of my head in the Christmas shopping scene in Camden Passage, as I brush shopping bags nonchalantly with Colin Firth, alias Paul.

Camden Passage is basically a huge antiques market. Confusingly, it is in Islington, lurking behind Upper Street - the district's main street, packed with eateries where real-life *Friends* scenarios seem to be in continuous play. To be honest, Chapel Market, opposite Angel station, is more my thing, where I am happy to buy vegetables as well as a selection of tacky birthday cards that play tunes when you open them. Most of the action in *Fever Pitch* is located at Highbury. Or rather, it isn't. The soccer highlights were filmed miles away at Fulham FC's Craven Cottage ground, because the Arsenal have become an all-seater and hence is now unsuitable for the Eighties terrace action required for the film. But the true fan will overlook this detail and head for Arsenal's home at Highbury, just north of Islington.

More confused geography. The Arsenal ground is called Highbury, although it is in fact in Arsenal, OK, so a lot of people know that, but I didn't. Just outside Highbury Tube station, I was halted by the lure of a bacon butty at the Seven Steps café (est 1922) on Highbury Place. With

its orange-and-brown wallpaper, "No Hawkers" and "No Toilets" signs, this is a café with an extra helping of don't-mess-with-me character. Yet it faces one of the most desirable areas of London, Highbury Fields.

In the film, Paul and Sarah go house-hunting, and Paul chooses an abode just a corner kick away from the Arsenal FC. Sarah gives it the proverbial yellow card. Now I realise why. Highbury Fields with its wonderful, four-storey Victorian houses, wrought iron railings and antique street lamps, is definitely more her style. Walking up Highbury Place and through Highbury Fields (which aren't really fields, more of a common) you see only happy, beautiful people with cute children.

I carried on through Highbury Barn, a mini-Hampstead-style village with overflowing recycling bins, Continental delis, cheese shops, and cosy knick-knack stores selling brightly-coloured wooden toys at mortgage prices. Even the kebabs were posh. Sarah would love this, I thought. Paul would be more sceptical. A scene in the film came to mind, where he picks an ethnic figure off Sarah's mantelpiece, looks bemused and asks "What's this for?" "It's not for anything," she responds. "It's just looking nice."

The transition from Highbury to Arsenal is gradual. The frequency of restaurants painted in rustic colours diminishes as you walk down Blackstock Road, past places such as Arsenal's Fish Bar, with plastic chairs screwed to the floor. When I reached a pub called The Gunners, I knew I must be getting warm. This is a shrine, with framed programmes and Arsenal strips. "Twenty minutes before the match, you can't move in here," the barman told me proudly.



Gunning for Arsenal: "I realised I was privy to a major life experience"

He pointed me towards the ground. As I got closer, the ratio of boarded-up houses to inhabited ones increased. Those that were lived in invariably had lager-can gardens and red Arsenal scarves across the windows. This was Paul's territory.

Then I saw it. A huge cream building stretching up the road. A sign said: "Museum open Fridays, £2. Wait here, gates opened every 15 minutes." It was Friday. I waited. The road was deserted, then I heard singing: it was a young postman pushing a post trolley. As he passed the ground he sang at the top of his voice "Arsenal, Arsenal, we're top of the league, Arsenal, Arsenal..." It was almost a religious moment.

I was joined at the gates by a thirty-something fan in an Arsenal coat. He looked me up and down and I came clean. I'd seen the film; I didn't know anything about football; would he show me round the museum? Miles, it turned out, was a Zimbabwean Arsenal pilgrim. His dad, a Londoner, had made him lis-

ten to Arsenal matches on the radio in Zimbabwe from the time he was six, and now he comes here every few years to watch his team. "It's fantastic, when it gets into your blood that's it," he said with a big sigh, adding, "I've only seen them lose once." The similarity between him and Paul, and Sarah and me, was spooky. Yes, he'd read *Fever Pitch*. "No one who loves football could not relate to it."

So Miles and I went round the museum, and he was very patient, listening to my inane questions. Who's the most famous player? "They're all famous!" "Isn't it funny that the Manager of Arsenal is called Arsene?" He smiled, and looked as if he really hoped the other two fans in the museum hadn't heard.

The atmosphere was like the hush in a church as the men moved from relic to relic. To me it was just lots of pictures of men with their arms folded in different-style shorts at different times in history. But when we watched *Arsenal: The Story So Far* in

the museum cinema, presented by Bob Wilson, and the men sat absorbed, whoah-ing, puffing and shaking their heads with admiration as goal after goal went into the net, I realised I was privy to a major life experience. I only just managed to stop myself shouting "Harsenal", Eric Morecambe style, when somebody farted.

I sent myself off, leaving the boys to commune on their own. I didn't belong, and didn't really understand what made Miles and his fellow fans so obsessed with Arsenal. But I did realise *Fever Pitch* was real-life stuff.

Fever Pitch (15) is on general release. Camden Passage: shops Tues-Sat, 10am-5pm; stalls Wed 7am-2pm, Sat 9am-3.30pm. Chapel Market, Chapel Street, Islington: daily except Mon, 10am-2pm. Arsenal Museum (0171-704 4000): Fri 9.30am-4pm, daily for pre-arranged stadium tours, match days two-and-a-half hours before kick-off. Adults £2, under-16s £1.



Simon Calder

"Plane crazy" is an over-used headline for aviation stories, but it was appropriate for *The Mirror's* front-page lead on Monday. In case you missed the piece, it began: "A jumbo made a £100,000 transatlantic flight carrying just one passenger. Stuart Pike, 33, travelling from New York to London, had the run of the 400-seater British Airways jet when all the other passengers transferred to another flight because of a fault. After being waited on by 17 stewards and stewardesses, he said: 'It was the most relaxing and pleasant flight I've ever had.'"

A jolly bank holiday yarn, then - but not as innocuous as it seems. Indeed, the tale raises a series of questions. For example: how come all the other passengers could fit on to the second plane? Can British Airways really do no better than half-fill its transatlantic 747s, even in the busy Easter season?

Any scheduled airline would answer this question by saying the whole point of a schedule is to offer guaranteed departures, no matter how few passengers choose to travel. BA no doubt believes its six jumbo flights a day between Heathrow and New York give it a competitive edge over other airlines.

So flying hundreds of empty seats across the Atlantic can be construed as good news for shareholders. If enough first- and business-class passengers pay several thousand pounds for the privilege of flying BA, it matters little that seats at the back of the plane are vacant.

Can British Airways really do no better than half-fill its transatlantic 747s, even during Easter?

What works for airlines, though, is not necessarily good for the planet. Transatlantic aircraft burn hundreds of tons of fuel at high altitude. The worst offender - making more noise, consuming more fuel and causing even more pollution than the biggest Boeing 747 - is Concorde.

The supersonic aircraft still flies twice a day at twice the speed of sound, whizzing 100 high-speed travellers between Heathrow and New York. Or rather, 100 seats. Two other stories this week involved the ageing jet. In both cases, a fault caused the plane to return to New York. The number of passengers affected? Fewer than 50 in each case. Readers in the south of England, regularly assailed by the deafening noise of Concorde's military engines should know that if the two daily departures were combined, the loudest plane in the sky would still not be full.

The other intriguing snippet that the stories revealed was that BA keeps a spare Concorde parked at Kennedy airport, just in case. Few other airlines can afford the luxury of spare capacity. Apparently, though, British Midland can. The airline has lent a Boeing 737 to John Major for his use during the election campaign.

Two more questions: would the plane otherwise be sitting around idle? And how many potential passengers will defect from British Midland to the non-partisan Air UK - flying British-made AEs 146s, quieter and more economical than the American Boeing?

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Last rites for the Masai

'Green' tourism is killing one of Africa's proudest tribes, writes Sue Wheat



Once were warriors: evicted from the land they've lived on for centuries, the Masai have been on the warpath in Birmingham

PHOTO: REUTERS

There are some things in travel of which everyone approves – conservation, for example, particularly of the wildlife reserves in East Africa. But life on this crowded planet is not that simple. If you stop to ask the people whose lands these are, you discover that not everyone is in favour of the concept of national parks as developed for the preservation of animals and pleasure of foreign tourists. This week, some of those people came to visit the country that dispatches many of said tourists.

"What would you like to drink?" I ask my oenophile friend. "Warm cow's blood," he replies, throwing his head back and laughing. "No, don't worry, I'll have a beer."

Sitting outside a London pub with the Masai – some in jeans and sweat-shirts, some in their traditional brightly coloured robes – was a surreal experience. The people next to us, having a quiet after-work drink, were naturally curious. "What are you doing here?" they asked, and the story of the Masai unfolded again.

The Masai are on a mission. Evicted from the land they've lived

for centuries, they became so desperate that they accepted an invitation to visit Birmingham. Red-nosed Comic Relief capers funded a Bristol charity, African Initiatives, which paid for three of them to take a course in conflict resolution in Selly Oak. After that, they toured Britain explaining their situation. I met them in London, tired and yearning for Masailand.

Masailand, to you and me, is Kenya and Tanzania. For them, there are no country boundaries, only traditional land demarcations which are based on ecological regions – wetlands and dry lands. "We are pastoralists – we graze cattle, sheep and goats and migrate from one spot to another so that it is never overgrazed. We know every detail of the land – the type of grass, the water, the animals, we are completely self-sufficient," explains Reyet, ole Moono, a young Masai man from southern Tanzania.

But in the name of conservation and tourism, terrible things have happened to the Masai lands over the last few decades. In a modern-day divide and rule, international

conservation agencies, say Reyet and his friends, encouraged the Tanzanian government to designate large chunks of Masailand as "protected areas" and forced the Masai out. "They didn't realise the land they have made into national parks is rich in resources and wildlife because we've kept it like that over centuries, grazing our livestock side-by-side with the wildlife."

Crammed into small pockets of land outside the parks without access to watering holes, salt-licks and enough grazing land, their livestock are dying. Without the livestock, the Masai are starving. Many of Reyet's friends have left for the city now, he explains. Others perform "ridiculous dances" for tourists on the roadside. With many men away, the women struggle on the land alone, explains Nolema Losioki Labdaki. "We have to walk six miles for water."

Across Kenya and Tanzania a total of 12,097 square miles has been lost to the Masai and made into national parks to attract tourists. The Masai are fined or imprisoned if they enter them, "but inside these 'conservation areas' there are roads, hotels, lodges,

and lots of tourist minibuses," says Reyet. "This word conservation is a contradiction." They say that, ironically, in some areas, 80 per cent of the wildlife have moved out of the national parks, so harassed are they by safaris. And now that the Masai are no longer there to scare off poachers, the wildlife that remains is threatened: there were 500 rhinos before the Masai were evicted; there are now only eight.

I am used to the Masai of travel brochures, proud and smiling. These Masai are proud, too, but behind their pride is anger and desperation. "We have not been consulted about conservation; we have been evicted; we do not gain any income from tourism, we are completely left out," says Kanderi ole Toroge, who now lives outside Serengeti National Park in Tanzania and is bringing a court action against two companies which are illegally building a lodge, airfield and zoo on his village land. "We like tourists," he adds, "but we want to manage tourism and benefit from it ourselves."

Kanderi is a mighty figure. With one hand holding a pint, the other

continually rewrapping his robe to keep out the cool evening air, he explains in no uncertain terms who is to blame. "The World Wide Fund for Nature, the Friends of Serengeti, the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), these are all international organisations that have decided what will happen to our land without ever asking us."

Later, I meet Kitulale Ntutu, "I am the son of the chief of all Kenyan Masai," he says, "and I am visiting the European Parliament tomorrow. They are using your taxes to fund these agencies who have evicted us and I'm going to ask them to stop."

I ask if they're hopeful for the future. "We're worried," they say, "but we're hopeful, we're getting educated, we're fighting in the courts." They are warriors, after all.

More information on the displacement of the Masai from African Initiatives, 41 Ashgrove Road, Bristol BS7 9LF (0117 952 0988) and Tourism Concern, Stapleton House, 277 Holloway Road, London N7 8HN (0171-753 3330).

Student travel writing competition winners

Top seats of learning

Write your way around the world – that was the offer made to Britain's students by *The Independent* in association with BT Chargecard, Campus Travel and us at Rough Guides writes Richard Trillo. Our student travel-writing competition asked for an account of entrants' university towns – and many took the job extremely seriously. We had listings of pubs and restaurants from Pickering to Pisa and from Derby to Dar-es-Salaam.

There was some solid, descriptive writing, too, squeezed into the 500 words allowed. It was the language of description, however, that failed some entrants as they struggled to make lively a grimy wasteland. There were, let it be said, too many bustling markets, busy streets and quaint alleys; far too many fascinating cities with rich cultural histories.

History itself defeated some entrants: the judges were dismayed to learn that Coventry had been "devastated by the Industrial Revolution", though this made more impact than the description of one university town (to remain nameless) where "the abundance of parking and major routes through the town centre tempt arrival by car".

Entries were anything but bland: Bristol is "a thriving, dynamic and progressive city", Hull "the gateway to Europe" or, more debatably, "rectum of the Uoever"; Leicester is simply "a city at the centre of everything".

There were five finalists, all of them women. Fifth prize, for a Eurostar trip to Paris and £750, goes to Esther Wolff for her sharply written guide to Cambridge. Fourth prize, for a trip to Bologna and £750, goes to Anna Sandig, for her unrelentingly grim account of Salford – full marks for blunt feelings. Third prize, a trip to Harvard and £1,000, goes to Elizabeth Blagburn, whose quirky appraisal of Birmingham gave the city

some appeal without exaggerating its charms. Second prize, a trip to San Francisco and £1,000, goes to Catherine Snell for her ideal day out in Newcastle with her dad – a masterpiece of précis. But in the end, it was the writing that settled it. Sheridan Humphreys' dramatically expressed, coffee-stained description of student life in London wins a trip to Australia and £1,500. Here is an extract...

My favourite coffee ritual is Goble Road on a Saturday morning. Oporto and Lisbon bask in the sun on winter Saturdays, their pavements crisscrossed with coffee lovers, and lovers. "Coffee in a glass," shrieks the Portuguese waitress in Oporto; it's the loudest voice I have ever heard outside the opera, and it's always a miracle that there's not a pile of shattered glass in a puddle of coffee. But to me, on hungover Saturdays it's the sweetest song of all. Even nicer when it's followed by "cheese croissant toasted". And if your croissant arrives blackened by the grill, well, that's the way it always is.

It's surprising that I get hangovers in London, because the pubs close at 11pm. Even on a Saturday night. That gives you enough time to have a coffee at Bar Italia in Soho before you catch the last Tube home from Leicester Square, where you can also get the first edition of your favourite Sunday paper. When you get home, you fall into a deep sleep to the soothing sounds of the shipping forecast. If you miss the last Tube, don't bother going home until 3am. You've got Trafalgar Square by moonlight and the night bus to look forward to. I'd rather have a hangover. A typical dilemma on Saturday morning at my house after a night out in London: How did this Patrick Cox man's shoe get into my handbag?

Sheridan Humphreys



something to declare

Trouble spots

Warnings for travellers, by travellers, in the new edition of *Wanderlust* (price £2.50; call 01753 620474).

Makgadikadi Pans, Botswana: "During the wetter months (February/March) the area is host to the migration of zebras and wildebeest. However, due to the rains it is very hazardous for the uninitiated to venture into the area under their own steam as there is a real danger of getting stuck."

St Petersburg, Russia: "Most night-life is run by the Mafia, but they keep their joints safe and clean as it encourages business. Most hotel night-clubs are basically pick-up joints for upmarket hookers and are best avoided. "Before you have too much fun, remember that from May to September all the city bridges are raised from 2am to 5am to allow boats to pass – and there is no alternative route home."

Mumbai (Bombay), India: "Arriving at the airport can be intimidating. Look out for the prepaid taxi office (on the right after you come through customs). If you are female, don't join the queue of men – you can be served straightaway if you go to the door of the office. There, you state your destination and pay for the taxi in advance. Give the receipt to the driver. You pay him no further money at your destination."

Samoa: "Kilikili is the Samoan version of a game only marginally recognisable as cricket. Rules are highly flexible and the number of participants can be dizzying." For more advice on specific destinations, contact the Foreign Office Travel Advice Unit on 0171-238 4503 or 4504, or fax 0171-238 4545; on the Internet, at <http://www.fco.gov.uk> or on BBC2 Ceejax from page 364 onwards.

True or false

You require intellectual stimulation from a holiday. You discover to your horror that your partner has booked you both on a fortnight's package to the Caribbean. You must, therefore, resign yourself to two weeks of cultural starvation.

That is, of course, false. As an intellectual, you will already have read the epic poem "Omeros" by the Nobel prizewinner Derek Walcott from St Lucia, and you will remember that his island boasts a second Nobel laureate in the economist Arthur Lewis, though you haven't read him yet. You also make a vow to read Martin Amis on St Lucia.

But in case your flight is diverted to the Dominican Republic, breaks down in Puerto Rico or is hijacked to Havana, you buy *The Caribbean, a Traveller's Literary Companion*, which sees readers out of tight corners everywhere from Tobago to the Bahamas. Every geographic section has a cultural introduction, letting you know, for

instance, that Barbados is a little too English, almost suburban, for some tastes, and that Brimstone Hill in St Kitts has a wonderful fortress, the Gibraltar of the West Indies. There follow extracts from the best books written about each place.

So if you are eventually carried off to the Dominican Republic, the *Companion* is on your side. It starts you off with an extract of the mendacious sales patter that Columbus – the 15th-century equivalent of a parliamentary lobbyist – gave to Ferdinand and Isabella, claiming that the rivers ran with gold. Then comes Quentin Crewe's tale of the restaurant in the town of Samana which serves *filete Gordon Blue*.

Sometimes the *Companion* tries to put you off places. Noël Coward's elegant punning of Frenchmen's pride in Martinique is reprinted. It ends:

In praising this celestial Freak They, one and all omit to speak

About its flat cathedral bells Its indescribable hotels The noisome and disgusting smells That make the island reek.

On your return to Islington, you don't tell anyone about Dr James Ferguson's invaluable book, because it would give away the source of your new-found encyclopaedic and cosmopolitan knowledge.

But when you are preening yourself over cocktails in Chelsea, squelch any reference to literary figures from Guyana, because the otherwise exemplary guide sadly fails to include that magical country.

Oh, and it contains a foreword by Margaret Drabble, a recommendation for the older literary treat. That can't be bad.

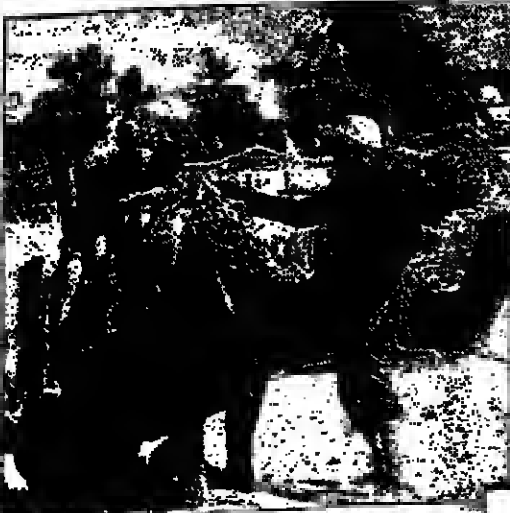
Hugh O'Shaughnessy

The Caribbean, a Traveller's Literary Companion, by James Ferguson (In Print Publishing, £13.95).

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Bargain of the week

At the stroke of midnight last night, the clock at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich began counting down the 1,000 days to the year 2000. To mark the Millennium – and to fill seats on their Boeing 747s (see story opposite) – British Airways (0345 222111) and Qantas (0345 747767) are selling two

return tickets to Australia for a total of £1,000 plus taxes of around £25 per person. The deal applies for travel until 30 June, but seats must be booked in the 2,000 minutes between 9am on Monday morning, 7 April, and 6.20pm the following day. Stopover options include Singapore, Tokyo and Johannesburg.

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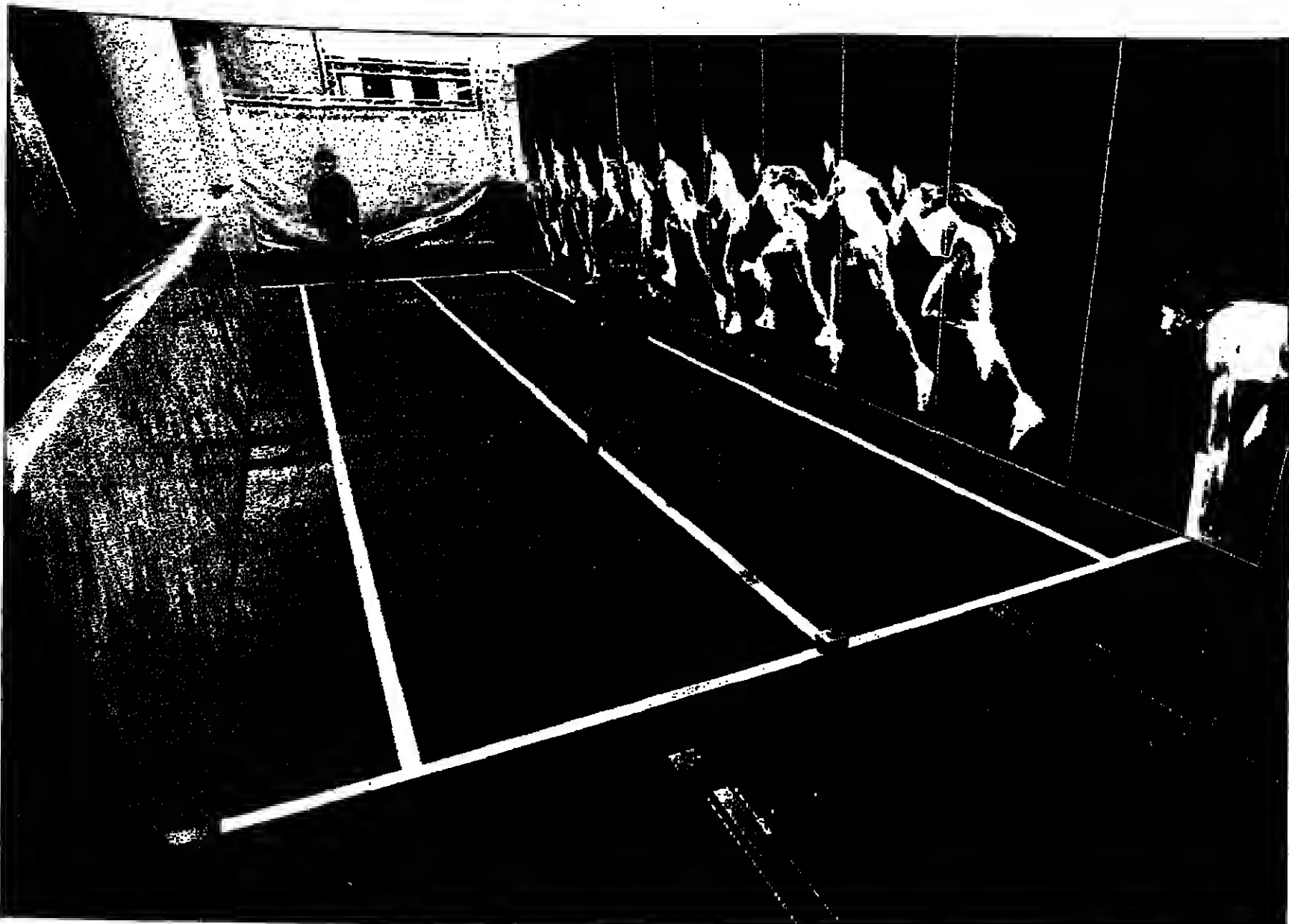
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On track: the Science Museum has constructed a cross between a gym and a virtual reality playground

PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD SYKES

A run for your money

Days out: Jane Furnival runs her family to the Science of Sport exhibition

Hands-on museum shows are passé. Legs-on exhibits are the in thing. Machines enabling you to put your whole self in, out, and shake it all about. That's the aim of Science of Sport, the Science Museum's new would-be blockbuster exhibition, and their answer to the V&A's Cutting Edge fashion show next door.

In an effort to get us off the couch and into trainers, they have constructed a cross between a glittering gym and a fairground, full of virtual reality machines, including volleyball, tennis, golf and rock-climbing. You can also shoot real goals in basketball or take a penalty shoot-out to the eerie accompaniment of roars of approval (or groans, if you

miss it) from an invisible crowd. Against it ain't. Each exhibit is staffed by impressively qualified sportspeople, often champions, who help anyone to have a crack at anything, even arm-achingly hard wheelchair racing. You can use Linford Christie's Olympic running-block to race 10 metres against a top runner. As you take your first

step, the virtual reality image turns into a Bugs Bunny-style streak into the distance, so no prizes there.

The visitors

Jane Furnival went to the Science of Sport exhibition with her husband Andy Tibble and sons William, 10, and Charlie, five, and family friend Alexandra Nadel, 13.

Jane: Each of us discovered unknown skills, so we all left feeling pleasantly surprised with ourselves. I beat off all comers in the "how steady is your hand?" test, a skill developed by holding overloaded shopping baskets in supermarket queues.

There are two virtual-reality pods, which you sit in and press a button to experience bobsleigh, Superbike TT, rally-driving or Formula One racing. It's claimed they give you the real feeling of G-force, but in fact it felt more like sitting in a giant cocktail shaker. The children loved it, but I found it no different from ordinary fairground rides.

The real plus of this exhibition was not the machines, which all had their limitations, but the infectious enthusiasm of the helpers. We had an ex-Marine called Andy, and Darren who had endless championships. With great good humour, they taught little Charlie how to kick a ball and William how to swing a golf club.

The potential problem for this show will be the queues, the invasion of yobs, and also boys pushing out girls. I hope the staff will control that. I would go again soon, before too many machines get tired and break down. Virtual reality machines can be tetchy.

Andy: I liked the virtual volleyball because it didn't involve too much exertion. Better still was the test for the speed of your reaction to sound and light. Great, because it involved the exercise of one finger only—and I was best at that.

I love the fact stuff about how fast people can run, and the section on the history of tennis was fascinating, but there wasn't enough of it. What was missing for me was discussion of the cultural aspects of sport. One of the most famous Somalis is a woman who runs wearing shorts, but I'd like to know how this goes down among the Islamic community. And it's all very well saying how sport is so good for you, but I'd like to know how sport can be bad for you, too.

Alexandra: I've never done any virtual reality things before, and it was fun playing volleyball with a ball that was just a shadow on a screen, but responded when you hit it. But you take the game less seriously than if a huge, real ball whams towards you. Climbing the rock face was hard work, but I enjoyed it so much that it made me think about taking up climbing. I was amazed that I scored best against everybody in the football penalty shoot-out. The sports experts taught me to kick the ball with the side of my foot, which will help me

when my brother wants me to shoot at him in goal.

I don't usually like museums, but I will definitely come back.

William: Snowboarding was best. You stand on this moving, wobbly board in front of an awesome screen showing a landscape that makes you think you're sliding really fast over the ice. It was easy to balance while the board twisted and turned, until you looked up at the screen. Then everyone fell off.

Now, about the treadmill—warning! Try it after lunch, not before, because it shows you how many calories you're using, and it's useful after you've had chocolate cake. As you walk on it, it takes a video of your feet which helped me to walk properly. When I got on it, I was shuffling my feet. My mum tells me off for that, but really seeing myself doing it on the video helped me correct it.

I wonder why they didn't have anything about cricket or hockey.

Charlie: I liked the running, because I could beat those boys who were helping.

The deal

Science of Sport is open for 18 months at the Science Museum, Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London SW7 2DD (0171-938 8000) from 10am to 6pm every day except Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Allow at least two hours to visit.

How to get there: Tube: South Kensington. Buses: 9, 9A, 10, 52, 14, 345, 74, 70, C1, 49. Entry costs are in two parts: £5.95 for adults aged 18 and over to get into the museum itself, plus an extra £3 for the Science of Sport section—for children aged five to 17, plus concessions, that's reduced to £3.20, plus an extra £2 for the Science of Sport. Under-fives go free.

Expect long queues to get in. You can bypass these by pre-booking a priority, timed visit from First Call on 0990 661 030, paying a 75p booking fee. Kit you need: trainers and sporty gear.

Vital to know: There is no re-entry to the exhibition, so make sure that you use the child-friendly loos just outside by the lifts before you start. Also, time your visit so that you don't become thirsty or ravenous half-way through. Feeding time: The museum cafés are expensive, and crowded. There is a picnic room for those with packed lunches. Leave your lunch bag in the free cloakroom in the basement, or you will be forever picking it up and putting it down while you visit the show.

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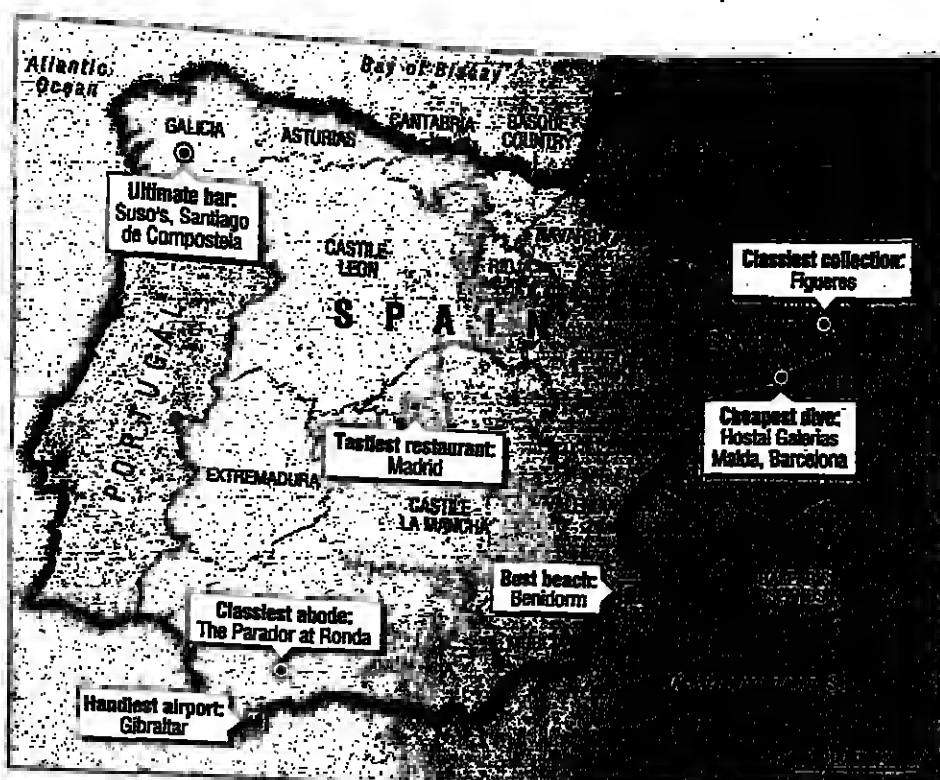
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The Dali Museum: emerging from this madhouse you wonder who slipped what potion into your elevenses

PHOTOGRAPH BY GUY MORGENTHAU

Seven Spanish superlatives

Where can you enjoy an awesome arc of beach, sleep (together) for £11 a night, visit a manic museum and more? Simon Calder offers a guide

Concocting a tour of superlative Spain constitutes the height of arrogance. Spain is blessed with 100 great museums, 1,000 fine beaches and at least a million convivial bars. Even if you strip away the off-shore islands (the all-time favourite destinations for British package tourists), you are left with an embarrassment of candidates for the best beach or greatest gallery.

The doors to this touristic toyshop were properly opened only 20 summers ago, when democracy was restored after the death of the Fascist Franco. I was the next plane out. Since then Spain has become an all-too-easy addiction – and, like any addict, I am possessed by insufferable certainties.

Handiest airport

Many of the people who are sniffy about Britain's best travel bargain – package holidays in Spain – have a woefully outdated image of the country's airports. Malaga, for example, is no longer a collection of scruffy huts around an airstrip. The architects of the new terminal embraced references from Andalusia's Moorish traditions and created a light, cool environment where much of the stress of air travel is borne away in the breeze.

Malaga has a handy rail link to the city it serves, and along the Costa del Sol. But for sheer, unadulterated toughness to tapas ease, the winner must be Gibraltar. The British colony's airport is strung out between the Rock and an easy place, the sleepy frontier town of La Línea.

Remember that pre-fabricated school hut? Gibraltar airport is like that. With no great distances for you or your luggage to cover between plane and exit, you can be sipping cerveza and tasting seafood within 10 minutes of the squeal of tyres on Tarmac. Just remember to turn right

(for Spain) rather than left (for Gibraltar), and hope that Hispano-Gibraltar relations are cordial. Otherwise you could have a long, thirsty wait at the border.

GB Airways flies frequently from Heathrow and Gatwick to Gibraltar, and on Sundays from Manchester. Book through British Airways on 0345 222111.

Ultimate bar

To find the best bar, you face a long journey to the extreme north west of Spain. And on the partygoer's pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, you could easily fall by the wayside, notably at the ultra-cool Nick Havanna in Barcelona. (Philippe Starck touches and if you have to ask prices; or the Palacio de Jamon, just west of the Puerta del Sol in Madrid, where ranks of whole hams hang like downcast members of a long bus queue, being cheerily devoured by nibbling drinkers.)

Persevere, though, to the city of St James. Santiago de Compostela is the end of the beaten track, so far from the tourist trail that Suso's bar is not as crowded as it should be. So once you've traced it in the backstreets behind the cathedral, there will probably be a spare bar stool on which you can wedge yourself against the stainless steel counter, your eyes on a level with an encyclopaedic array of snacks.

"Keep it simple, Suso", seems to be the house motto: *gambas a la plancha* (grilled prawns), *chorizo* (bloody, rich sausage), *calamares* (hoops of squid) and *torrillo* (slabs of inch-thick omelette). The theory is that these are the meagre *raciones* to accompany aperitifs, but in the congenial company it is all too easy to forgo the option of dinner. One danger you are unlikely to face is bankruptcy, since your host regards tourists with benevolence. And if your early evening stretches into last orders, then you can always avail

yourself of a bed in the lodging house upstairs.

Suso's bar and hostel, Rua del Vilar 65, Santiago de Compostela (00 34 81 586611).

Cheapest dive

There is still a country in the European Union where you can find a decent double room for a shade over £10 a night. Or, rather, there is *now* such a country. Sterling is performing spectacularly well against the peseta, which means that you get around 225 for your £1 compared with fewer than 200 a year ago. So this is going to be a long, cheap summer for visitors to Spain, particularly if they dwell at the Hostal Galerías Malda in Barcelona.

Rogues abound in the Catalan capital, not least among some of its hoteliers. If the pickpockets in the Ramblas don't get you, their partners in crime who charge £50 for grotty rooms may well. I discovered the happy *habuaciones* in the heart of the city only after half-a-dozen visits to Barcelona, during which I paid too much for too little. One reason it took me so long to find the place is that the Galerías in the title is a shopping arcade, buried away in the Carrer del Pi. Unless a good friend led you to the *hostal* on the upper floor, you would never believe it existed.

It is run by quite the friendliest family in Spain, who are unobtrusive when you want to be alone in your elegantly dated room, but hostily when you need company. For all this, and a location that cannot be bettered (200 metres from the Ramblas and the cathedral), you pay a few pence short of £11 for two.

Hostal Galerías Malda, Carrer del Pi, Barcelona (00 34 3 317 3002).

Classiest abode

Would you swap a week in the Hostal Galerías Malda for a night at the parador in Ronda? Probably, once you see this new addition to the Spanish government's repertoire of luxurious hotels in historic properties. This one has a miraculous location, perched on the gorge that rips through the hilltop town of Ronda, high above the rest of Andalusia. The ancient foundations of the old town hall have been amplified in honeyed rock, merging perfectly with the sandstone cliffs.

If the parador has a problem, it is of being a degree too perfect. The rooms are a fraction too well-appointed, the restaurant a tad too fancy. But you'd expect that

response from someone who recoils from spending £80 a night at any hotel.

Parador de Ronda, Plaza de España, Ronda (00 34 5 287 7500).

Best beach

Disdainers of the cheap package should move *en masse* to the Costa de la Luz, that splendid unspoilt strand that broadly connects Portugal with Gibraltar by way of Cape Trafalgar. This coast is hulled by the Atlantic, so they will certainly be chiller than the mass of us who make for the Mediterranean.

For my Spanish holiday this summer, I have bought a Skytours package in the resort with the best beach on the mainland: Benidorm. This awesome arc of clean and genuinely golden sand would be a magnificent specimen of beach anywhere in the world; its added appeal is that it is two hours from Gatwick, 10 minutes from grand Valencian scenery and 20 metres from some cracking bars. Carlsberg – probably the best lager in the world? Not with San Miguel and Estrella on sale at well under a pound a pint.

Skytours is a budget brand of Thomson (0990 502555 or through travel agents).

Tastiest restaurant

Fights have broken out over the best places to eat in Lloret de Mar, let alone the whole of Spain. In a country where it is difficult not to dine well for a fiver, you have to search hard for a place where an extra dimension is added to the virtues of wholesome food, prepared imaginatively and served with verve.

The answer lies in an obscure corner of Madrid. An eccentric Basque Surrealist named Abraham Garcia founded Restaurant Viridiana, specialising in exquisite *nouvel Español* cuisine delivered with theatrical panache. Performances begin with a pyrotechnic fruit salad, the melon decorated with a small incendiary device. It arrives with a fig leaf bearing a message of good wishes from the kitchen inscribed in piped cream. Then the evening ignites.

Book in advance on 00 34 1 356 9040. **Viridiana** is well away from the centre of the city at **Fundadores 23**, close to **Manuel Becerra** metro station.

Classiest collection

The toughest category of all. A single street in Madrid has three of the finest galleries in the universe: the grandiose

Prado, the eclectic Thyssen-Bornemisza and the clinical Reina Sofia, venue for Picasso's *Guernica*. Pablo is also well represented across to Barcelona, with an entire museum devoted to him. His fellow Catalan, Joan Miró, gets a good showing here, too.

The greatest of all, though, is further up the Mediterranean coast in the otherwise unlovely town of Figueras. Clear winner of the "who's the craziest artist in Catalonia, then?" competition was Salvador Dali, whose vision of Surrealism has come to its illogical conclusion at the Teatro-Museo Dali. The "theatre" refers to the setting, the old town theatre. The "museum" conceals the vitality of the fun palace where Dali is hurried. A black Cadillac holds court in the centre, sporadically getting drenched from an internal shower. Mae West is commemorated in a hound of her own, where the furniture comprises her features.

By the time you emerge from this madhouse, you are wondering quite who slipped what potion into those chocolate *y churros* you enjoyed for elevenses.

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Chic galore: Sally Holton's flock, bred solely for their wool, have captured the imagination of the fashion designer Katharine Hamnett

PHOTOGRAPHS
MARC HILL/APEX

Shear style in Somerset

Katherine Hamnett is making rare sheep chic, writes Matthew Brace

There was uproar in the barn. Ewes and their lambs paced in the straw, sending dust floating up through the rays of sunlight. Their bleats were loud and piercing. Gino III, a heavily pregnant ewe, was about to give birth. Her waters had broken and two of her lamb's hooves could be seen protruding from between her legs. One of the world's rarest breeds of sheep was about to have its oomphs boosted.

The flock's owner, Sally Holton, looked tense. She encouraged Gino III: "Come on, old girl, it'll be a lot better once you get it over with." But it was taking too long: something was wrong. Mrs Holton huddled the low wall of Gino III's enclosure, held her firmly by the scruff of the neck, grabbed the lamb's hooves and began to pull. In a flash, two lambs were lying bewildered and blinking in the sunlight, being licked clean by their mother.

They were the new generation of Wensleydales and their wool, bloody and straw-caked at birth, was destined to cloak the shoulders of supermodels on the catwalks of London, Paris and Milan. Mrs Holton's flock, bred solely for their wool, have captured the imagination of the fashion designer Katharine

Hamnett, who cannot get enough of the silky, lustrous fleeces with their long wool.

The outspoken designer who created the fashion of slogan T-shirts calling on people to "Preserve the Rainforests" has turned to grass roots in the English countryside to seek out environmentally-friendly materials for her knitwear.

"The wool is exceptionally soft," says Katharine Hamnett. "The quality is wonderful, more like mohair. We are delighted with the results."

Some of her designs using Wensleydale wool were paraded at the Winter 1993/94 Milan fashion show. "Next to Armani and Gucci, there were our little bits of knitwear running up and down," Mrs Holton recalls.

Her wool is about as ecologically sound as raw materials get. The sheep are reared traditionally and organically in the Somerset village of Stoke sub Hamdon.

"We don't like this crash-bang-wallop style of today's farming," she says. "We don't even use a dog. When we are gathering them up, all we have to do is call them and they come running."

The farm uses no synthetic chemicals or antibiotics and practices homeopathy rather than conven-

tional medicine. Once the sheep are shorn, the wool is then washed, combed and spun, avoiding all the chemical processes of conventional wool production. The dyes all come from plants growing locally, which Mrs Holton gathers by hand. Most afternoons you can catch sight of her rummaging through the hedgerows along the banks of Ham Hill, overlooking the village.

The floor of Mrs Holton's office, in a cramped farm outbuilding next to her home, is cluttered with steel bowls full of soaking green walnuts, tree bark-garbled roots and petals. "We experiment, using old recipes from the 1600s for our dyes. We really don't know what we'll get when we soak various twigs or herbs. It's very exciting."

She dips her hand into a sweet jar full of colourless, bone-dry lichen. "This is oak moss. If you ferment this in natural ammonia - you know, urine - for about two weeks, the water will turn the deepest emerald purple. But if you hold it now it would be bright yellow," she says. "So every shank of wool or knitted garment we produce has its own unique colour." She runs through a line of coloured shanks of wool hanging by the wall: onion-skin orange, wood blue and others.

The Holton-Hamnett partnership has meant that at a time when many rare breeds of farm animal are on the brink of extinction, this line, at least, is being saved. Wensleydales are described by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust as being "at risk". If their numbers drop further they will become "vulnerable", then "endangered", and finally "critical", before vanishing, taking with them 200 years of farming history.

Long-wool Wensleydales can be traced back to the late 18th century when their ancestors would have been plentiful across England, although the family tree of the white wool sheep, from which Wensleydales have come, dates even further back, before records were kept - to Roman times when, it is thought, they were introduced to Britain.

The Trust's national field officer, Peter Klog, believes that Mrs Holton's flock is proof of the worth of rare breeds. "The link with fashion can only do good for the breed and for rare breeds in general, and it helps to explode the myth that breeds are rare because they are useless," he says.

"Rare breeds are every bit as valuable as stately homes. Each one has fascinating attributes. None

of us can say what will be needed in 100 years' time, so the more biodiversity in farm animals we have, the better."

Mrs Holton is proud to have deliberately discarded modern methods and returned to the roots of rural tradition. "One of the reasons we do this is to show that we can produce a top-class product in a chemical-free environment. You can be commercially viable just by changing back to older, traditional ways," she says.

"I just can't stand the state that we have all got to, the way we live our lives. The way we have lost touch with nature and with reality. Everyone seems to be out for themselves, moving faster and faster and not caring about the world around them."

However, business does demand a certain amount of modern thought. Mrs Holton does own a fax machine, which lately has been spitting out valuable orders from buyers in Taiwan - the home of synthetic goods - who are interested in her home-grown wool and Hamnett's designs, and willing to pay large amounts for them. Enough to keep Gino III's two new lambs in homeopathic medicine for quite a while.

Clay pigeons came whizzing out like dots in the stratosphere



Duff Hart-Davis

To Highclere Castle, seat of the Earls of Carnarvon, for a grand blast-off at clay-pigeons. Two specific requests from the management set this apart from an ordinary day's shooting. First, everybody should bring a hand-guard or glove, as gun barrels would become too hot to hold. Second, everybody should wear a hat, since broken clays, falling from unexpected directions, can cause nasty injuries.

With these and a few more instructions, our genial organiser, Wendy Plummer, launched the party into a brilliant spring morning. A veteran of simulated game shooting, Wendy is now in her sixth year of laying on this kind of day. For Highclere, on the other hand, it was an experiment.

With its splendid Victorian castle in an undulating, 3,000-acre park, the estate has every natural advantage for corporate entertaining, and the aim of our day was to see if this kind of shoot would fit into the pattern of activities.

The guns, 16 in all, had been allocated into eight pairs, each with a loader, and had drawn for places, as on a live bird shoot. At the first drive, pegs were set out in a line along the bottom of a sloping grass bank. Out of our sight, at the top, six traps were deployed under the control of the operations manager, Roo Puttock.

The guns took it in turns to shoot, and the drive, lasting only six minutes, was done twice over. If that sounds parsimonious, it takes no account of how sharply adrenaline levels rise as clays start to pour over.

When the whistle went, the rate of fire was instantly terrific: within less than a minute, barrels were too hot to hold with bare hands, and after six minutes several of the marksmen were temporarily exhausted, declaring that they could not have gone on a moment longer. During that fearsome barrage the coolest person on the scene was Wendy herself, who strolled up and down behind the line, constantly adjusting the flow of clays by radio contact with Roo. "Raise trap two a bit... Get some pairs out over pegs three and four. Five's a novice. Give him low singles."

After the drive she remarked, "That was the easy bit. Now we'll go somewhere more testing." This was Heaven's Gate, a towering bank scattered with high trees. Here the clays came whizzing out like dots in the stratosphere, and it took an ace marksman to break them.

One such was Peter Baxendale, who manages shooting lets for Strutt & Parker. In six searing minutes he missed seven clays and broke about 70 - but then, as he shoots all winter, so he should. Lord Forchester, elder son of the Earl of Carnarvon, also scored heavily and admitted that he was amazed by the excitement which the blast-off engendered.

As people recovered their equilibrium over bull-shots and slow gin, I asked several what advantage there was, or might be, in spending £3,500 of their companies' money on such a jolly. Tim Ingram Hill, chairman and chief executive of RoadChef, reckoned it good value. "A day like this relaxes people a great deal," he said. "You see a different side of them." Whom might he invite? "People we're working with - our bankers, solicitors, construction people: some who have entertained us, others we'd like to do business with."

During the morning there was much talk about the Castle's chef, Mark Greenfield, and by 1pm people were openly wondering whether lunch would justify his high reputation. With Van Dyck's magnificent equestrian portrait of Charles I glowering down on us, we feasted on salmon tartare, home-cured venison, lemon mousse and cheese - a meal so stylish and protracted that the afternoon's shooting had to be curtailed from two drives to one.

I do not think anyone minded. On the final bank, serious poaching broke out as everybody merrily began shooting his neighbour's birds. "That's one of the points about this," remarked William Asprey, manager of the London gun-makers, as we headed for home. "You can do that here. But if you did it on a live game day, you'd never be asked again."

Clay days can be arranged through Plummer Dixon Associates, Sherborne, Cheltenham, Glos GL54 3DR (01451 844714).

The trainer turned bystander

John Bosely, elder statesman of racing, has a detached view of today's Grand National. By Richard D North

John Bosely, who at 66 is an elder statesman among National Hunt trainers, never really made it to the big time. This Oxfordshire man, regarded with affection as someone who loved horses and horse people, was never one to put money-making first. "I don't think the racing ever made much money. But we were farmers too," he says.

Last month, the mild Mr Bosely retired, so he notes the runners at this weekend's Grand National at Aintree with a degree of detachment. "My son Martin runs the stables now," he says, and, beyond helping out from time to time, he is free to consider a return to hunting. "I haven't ridden this season, but I won't say I've given up." It is hard to tell which is uppermost in his mind and voice: intended mischief or regretted caution.

Hunting is one of the few determinedly dangerous pastimes of the middle-aged. But then, John Bosely was a serious amateur jockey before he took up training. He knows the horrors of the Grand National: "I fell at the 14th on Dark Stranger in 1953," he says. His scrapbook has a picture of him in mid-air, upside down, above his horse's head. It wasn't the fall that fractured his skull in 1959 and forced his retirement from riding, but even in a yellowing piece of newspaper it is vividly painful.

Also in the scrapbook is the traditional scene of a hard-living pack of jockeys in full



Rooted in country ways, John Bosely

RICHARD D NORTH

flight on tin trays down the stairs of the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool before the Grand National. Bosely was regularly amongst the leaders in his young days. Even more confident in his own county, as a trainer he once shot out the searchlights of Brize Norton RAF airfield. This time it was not high jinks that motivated him: the lights were disturbing one of his fancied runners before a big race.

The son of a farmer and hatcher, who was a bookie when off-course betting was illegal, Bosely is a stoutly yeoman figure, whom it is hard to imagine at a jockey's weight. In the Fifties and Sixties he was rare among amateur jockeys. "Most of the amateurs were real gentlemen, lords even." He did not harbour delusions of grandeur: "I never wanted a sports car or anything."

The business of betting your shirt on something as inherently unreliable as a horse, let alone on the outcome of the

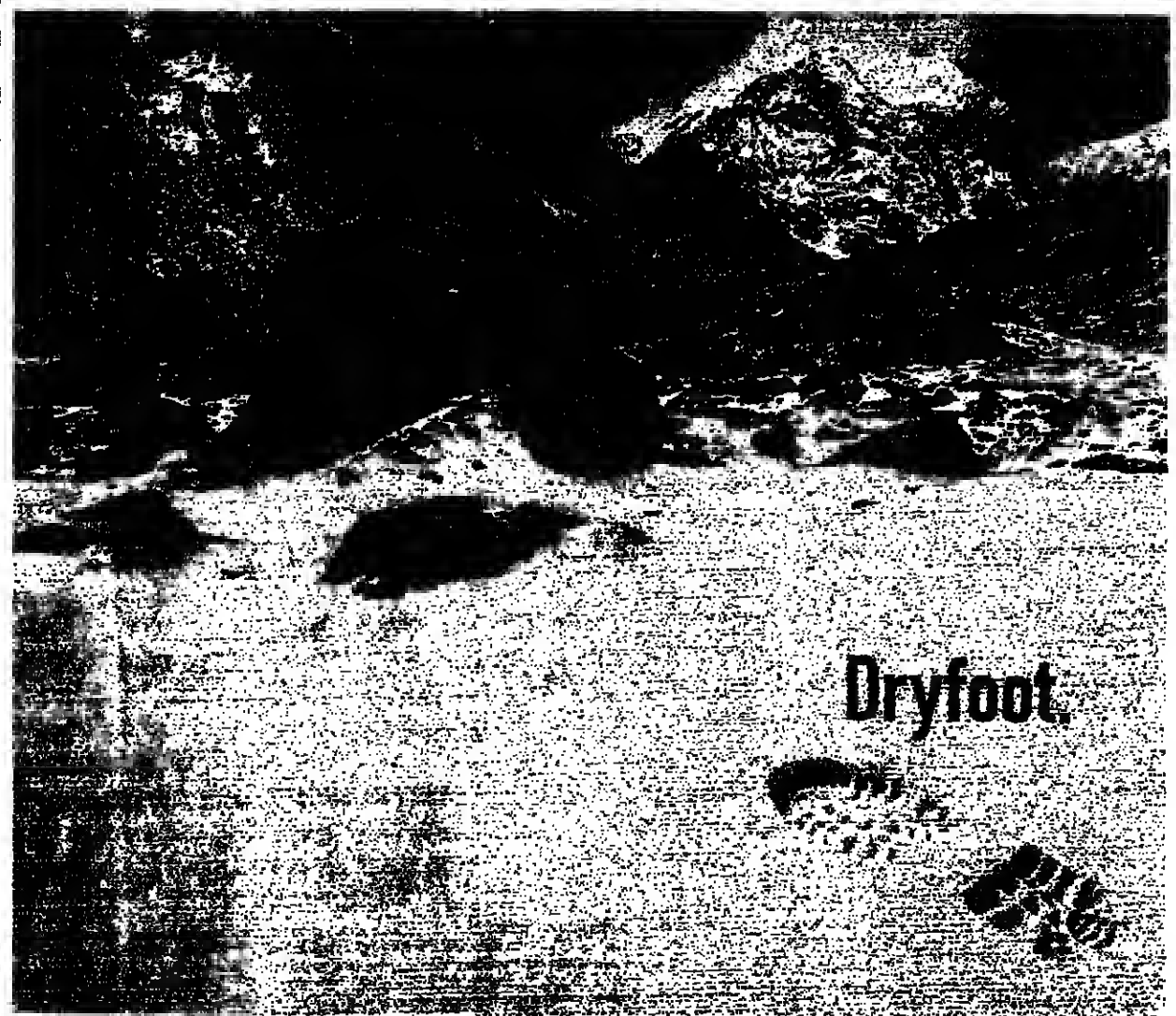
competition of several horses, attracts chancers and charmers. Bosely is not the sort to mourn the old days. "It's as much fun as ever," he says, but one has the feeling that he rather disapproves of the way "it's a business now. People come in and think they'll make money." The more rational view is that owning horses should be indulged in only by people who can afford to lose what they invest, if "investment" is quite the word for watching money being turned into hot breath on an early morning canter.

Betting, by the way, is generally governed by the reverse proposition: you haven't had a bet until you are very fearful of the outcome. Bosely hardly ever bets: seeing it from the bookie's point of view must have robbed it of its glamour.

Racing has become more democratic, he thinks. "Years ago, only the wealthy owned horses. Now even people in

factories may join a syndicate and pay something like £20 or £30 a week." On such a basis, someone with £1,800 to spare could buy into a well-bred horse with a long Bosely and Grand National lineage. John's son Martin, who runs the Bosely outfit at Kingston Lisle Farm, just over the hill from the glamorous spreads at Lambourn, has on offer shares in Smart Lord and Lady Malord, whose grand dam was Eyecatcher. This Bosely-owned and trained horse was third in Red Rum at Aintree in 1976 and 1977. The stables charges modest fees and does not yet attract the Arab owner, or the flashier or grander sort.

From now on, it will be Martin who fields the calls from anxious owners, and John Bosely is glad of that, though he and his wife Sylvia will be in demand for the parties which have kept the stables' punters more than sweet for decades. It was at one such bash at Warwick races last month when Martin, a noted jockey himself, cleaned up in the tipsters' competition. John is proud of the family side of things: "It is quite something to see your son win on a horse you own, bred and trained." He now has a grandson entering the fray as an amateur jockey - so another game youngster with no pretensions to be a nob and entirely without side will help keep the racing game decently rooted in its country ways.



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John Bosely



Seen by scene: Ralph Fiennes' and Willem Dafoe's clothes in the Oscar-winning film had women wishing their men could at least dress the part even if they couldn't match them for looks

Silk from celluloid

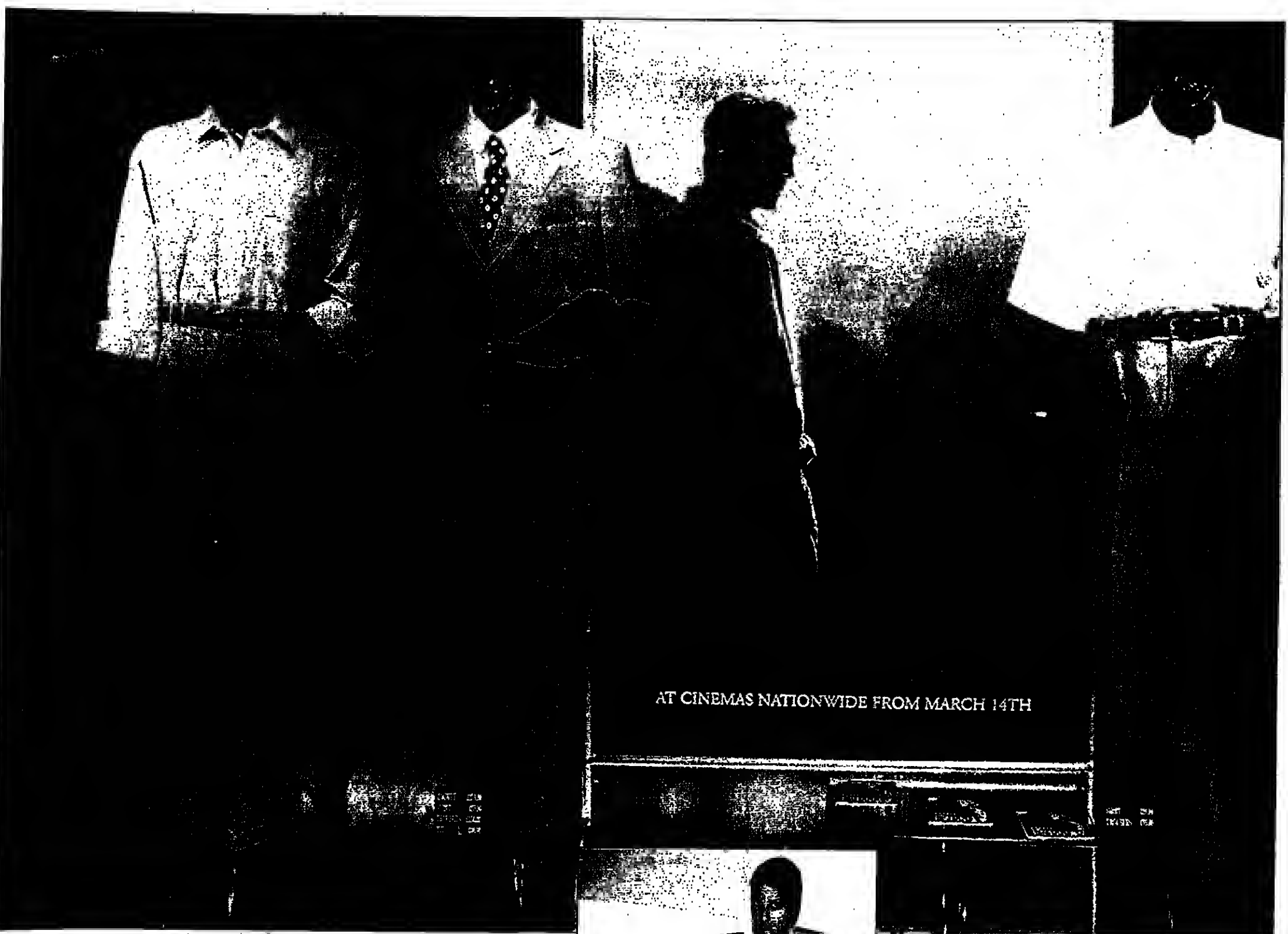
He looked moody and mean, but Ralph Fiennes never lost his style in *The English Patient*. Now, writes Melanie Rickey, all men can follow suit

It's not just the moody, enigmatic looks that make women swoon and men envious. It's the look itself. And it was the look, created for Ralph Fiennes as Count Laslo de Almásy in *The English Patient*, which helped the film's costumer, Ann Roth, win her first Oscar. The inspiration for the star's clothes came in part from the Duke of Windsor, one of the greatest trendsetters for men ever, (he is reputed to have popularised the knife-pleat trousers seam in his day), and also from his tailor, Mr Halsey of Savile Row.

In fact, says Ann Roth: "Ralph was fitted for his clothes by the very man who once fitted Gary Cooper and Fred Astaire in the 1930s".

And you can't get much more stylish than that. But it is our hero's less structured clothes, not the Savile Row tailoring, which have inspired men into a serious re-think of their image - with the full encouragement and sometimes brute force of their partners. There is something irrepressibly charming and timeless about a man in a crumpled linen suit. Now that Ralph has played that part and women have expressed the desire to trade in their partners for a Count Laslo de Almásy lookalike, men can no longer get away with a walk-on part proffering Kleenex to tearful *amorati* in the cinema.

They've got to take some style tips from coolly passionate, quiet, irresistible Ralph. They can do more than observe the panache with which Ralph slips in and out of his jacket or how Willem Dafoe as the broody Caravaggio sports his shirts. They can take a trip to the High



AT CINEMAS NATIONWIDE FROM MARCH 14TH

Street and their local Jaeger store.

Jaeger sponsored the film's gala opening in March and has continued to promote the film throughout the country with window displays such as the one above. It just so happens that Jaeger has been selling the English Patient "look" for some time - English classics are their thing after all. However, it took a company representative who saw the film in America to spot the connection (particularly with their summer collection), and go for the sponsorship deal.

Jaeger did not make clothes for the film, their version of *The English Patient* look is more modern and up-beat. Jaeger still use natural fab-

rics for their clothes, all of which are sourced within Europe and made in Scotland. Mark Hooper, their Menswear Director says: "We don't cut corners. Small details you can't see, but can feel, like chest pieces for structure are important to us, as is finish". The Jaeger man is not a funky club goer, nor particularly fashion conscious, "he is not cutting edge, of course he's not," says Hooper, "but he still wants to look up-to-date without being faddy".

And he's just the sort of man who would buy a gorgeous crumpled linen suit and go venturing off to the Sahara desert for a holiday - or in search of Kristin Scott-Thomas.

The English Patient connection is working well for the company. They have produced a silk/linen three button single breasted suit with a pleated turn-up trouser, and pure cotton shirts and suits in both natural stone and beige colours and clean, bright shades such as sage and nutmeg - all of which are featured in their window displays. (Incidentally, silk/linen does crumple, but not as crisply as 100 per cent linen garments, and is much softer on the skin.)

Women are not left out. They get their chance to look as cool as Kristin with a range at Jaeger Women.

Taking fashion tips from hot movies is not new, but for a change, at least, it's easy.



Peanut suede bootleg trouser, £320 matching belted jacket £470 by Jaeger

WINNING OUTFIT

You have a chance to win a mens outfit, to the value of £500, which Jaeger have kindly offered to the first reader who answers this question correctly: What is the name of the book Hana (Juliette Binoche) reads to her English patient, and which stirs up so many painful memories for him?

Answers should be sent on a postcard stating personal details and inside leg, waist and chest measurements to: English Patient Competition, Janine Walton, Jaeger, 57 Broadwick Street, London, W1V 1FU.

For your nearest Jaeger Men store call 0171-200 4000

Jaeger window from left:

Blue cotton shirt, £55, chin's £85, belt £22; silk/linen in 'Donkey' jacket, £270, matching trousers, £130, cotton shirt, £55, tie, £40; linen/cotton short sleeved white shirt, £55, linen trousers, £95, belt £22.

JACKET	£270.00
SHIRT	£55.00
TROUSERS	£130.00
TIE	£40.00

Under the counter with Lindsay Calder

How a shopping spree can leave you feeling run down

Had I not spent that extra half hour deciding whether I was a 34C or a 36D with the fitter in the bra department, it would never have happened. I would not have been late, and would not have been knocked down by a black cab.

I was feeling euphoric, after having discovered that a painting I had bought in a junk-shop for £60 was worth £500. So after leaving Sotheby's I had bit of a Bond Street binge with this new megal credit of £440, which ended with a final flourish of Visa-flexing in Fenwick. Anyway, as it was now far too late to even think of taking a bus, I hailed this cab...

Big mistake. My cabbie, had always minded his own business all his life, and never bothered anyone else, and he was taking a letter - in person - to that John Major, he was, so he was, and to that European Court if it came to it, after what "they" done to him. Who "they" were and what "they" dooe, I was unable to ascertain, but it seemed to be something to do with a "coupla-million". As he became more and more manic about this, I was rather regretting my towe to the dicky seat behind him. I had been lured, you see, by what I now realise was his last entrapment tactic to make you listen to his lunatic rantings - Burt, a ten year old

Dalmation. Burt travelled in the front of the cab, because he got depressed on his own at home. As I had shown great interest in Burt, by moving closer to get a better view of him, the cabbie seemed to think that I would also be interested in his own annoying existence. That mutt must rue the day he showed signs of depression at home.

When I finally arrived at my destination, I was so relieved to be out of this cab from hell that I ran across the road and whack! was knocked down by another taxi.

He didn't have time to brake - my hip carried out that function for him - it also

broke his headlight. He thought he had killed me, but then, in what he described as an "act of self preservation", I apparently sprang up onto my feet. So there I was, standing amidst my pristine new 34Cs, which mixed with pieces of headlight, were now decorating the street, trying to tell the cabbie that I really didn't need to go to hospital. This happened right outside my husband's hairdressers' chambers, so with the faintest whiff of a Personal Injury claim in the air, a gaggle of lawyers came in the rescue and told me that I must stop "admitting liability".

To check that no damage had been

done, I spent four frustrating hours waiting at the Whittington Hospital casualty department. During my wait I read in the paper that the hospital was due to close down, and then began to wonder if it had already and that they had forgotten to tell us. Finally, I was seen by a smug young doctor, let's call him Dr Bastard, who had obviously skipped off the bedside manner lectures. He questioned me in a point scoring fashion, like a malingering, in spite of the fact that I had waited four hours to see the little creep. Finally whilst manipulating my leg, he said "look, if there was something broke you'd be punching me

by now". I was sorely tempted to do it anyway.

When I got home there were two messages from Tony, the cabbie who knocked me down. He'd even called in at the hospital to ask if I was alright. Cabbies aren't all bad, but this was a helluva way to enlighten me...

Lejaby bras, 32A-38DD, from £39-£45, Fenwick, New Bond St, London. Taxi fair from Bond St to Theobalds Road £4.20 (without tip). Headlights for a black cab, £49 + VAT, Mann and Overton, 52 Holloway Road, London N7.

pensions: the facts

FOUR-PAGE
PERSONAL
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Take one plan: pay in £2,400 worth of premiums over two years. It could now be worth only £376. Why?

As many as one third of all personal policies are hit by massive upfront charges. Some are worth less than the original investment. John Chapman explains who profits and how

Hundreds of thousands of personal pensions policies started last year are worth less when they are halted than the amount they received in contributions. In some cases, the value of the investment may be worth a fraction of total contributions into the scheme, after massive upfront policy charges have been deducted by insurers.

The potential losses for tomorrow's pensioners is caused by the extremely high lapse rates on most personal retirement contracts. On average, 25 per cent of policyholders halt payments into schemes they buy from insurance salespeople within two years of starting them. For financial advisers, the figure is 15 per cent. Thereafter, "lapse rates" generally continue at about 6 per cent a year.

Yet most companies, including household names such as Albany Life, Allied Dunbar, Guardian (formerly GRE), Lincoln National (now called Lincoln) and Sun Life, levy the majority of their charges in the first few years. Very little of the money paid in during that period is actually invested. Those halting contributions before then face potentially heavy losses as a result.

For example, total payments of £2,400 into a pension from Black Horse Financial Services, an offshoot of Lloyds Bank, may only be worth £734 after two years, even assuming investment growth of 9 per cent for each of those years. In an extreme example, Old Mutual offers only £376. It can take up to seven years before "break-even", the point at which the pension is worth the same as contributions.

Ironically, the same payments into a pension with TSB Life, part of the same group, would be worth £2,394 after the same period.

Research shows that despite

Charges

claims by the personal pensions industry to have cleaned up its act after the mis-selling scandal, hundreds of thousands of fresh victims are being created each year. All this is in sharp contrast to the promised boon for savers when these new products were launched on an unsuspecting world in the late 1980s.

A joint investigation by *The Independent* and Granada's *World in Action* TV programme, to be shown on Monday night, reveals that several companies with the highest sales

and the best-known brand names are guilty of the same poor standards.

Nevertheless, with generous tax relief and high-profile regulators to provide comfort to customers, nearly a million new pension plan holders buy the industry's products every year.

Our analysis shows that of 903,000 new policies taken out in 1996, about 307,000 are likely to lose money, receiving less from their investment than the total amount paid in premiums. This is an average for the industry, and many companies have much worse records. Yet few people realise the extent to which these policies may result in losses rather than gains.

Even fewer realise that the government, through tax relief on pension contributions, appears to be meeting a large part of these losses. In effect, it is subsidising the insurance industry's charging structures.

With its rebates, a significant number of potentially loss-making policies may break even or show a small return on their investment. Without the rebate, savers would suffer even more.

One way the industry could be cleaned up would be for the next chancellor to threaten to withhold tax relief on contributions to new personal pension plans sold by com-

panies with unacceptably large numbers of loss-making policies.

The cost to customers is closely related to the personal pensions mis-selling scandal of the late 1980s and early 1990s, since the losses when people were wrongly persuaded to switch from company pensions to personal pensions arose because their new plans provided much lower benefits, as is still the case today.

There are two key issues. First, the charges levied on customers whose policies lapse or are transferred before maturity are very high. They are usually also complex, obscure and easy to manipulate.

Second, it has become clear since companies have had to disclose their figures that a very large proportion of policyholders do lapse early. The result, as simple as adding two and two, is that there are a very large number of loss-making policies.

Lapses may be for many different reasons, including ill-health or any other change in circumstances that makes the continuing monthly payments a burden.

By their nature, the plans also have "in-built lapses", as they cannot be continued when planholders join occupational schemes, or when they become unemployed. And with a wide variety of products on the market, there is ample scope for "churning", as the practice of persuading planholders to move their policies to apparently more attractive ones is described.

It is this enormous group, those who lapse early for whatever reason, that are penalised by the industry's charging practices.

Our investigation shows the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. If you have a pension within any of these categories, act now - before it is too late.

The charge before the industry

The personal pensions industry has long argued that charges on the products it sells are not the most important aspect to be considered when a policy is bought.

It points instead to performance of any fund as the key test of whether a pension is good or otherwise. After all, would you begrudge fund managers their just reward if they delivered sparkling returns?

At first sight the answer is obvious. Except that most of the time most fund managers turn in less than scintillating performances. And, as the saying goes, past performance is no guide to the future. Charges, on the other hand, stay in place over the lifetime of a contract. Their impact on final payout can be massive.

Take, for example, a manager who charges 1 per cent a year to look after your money. Another manager who charges 1.5 per cent a year over

the 25-year lifetime of a policy would have to return 12.5 per cent more just to remain on an equal footing. In many cases, this will be unlikely.

The problem is made worse by the way many companies levy their charges. Moreover, these charges are often disguised with innocuous-sounding phrases like "capital units". Thus, some funds will levy 4 or 5 per cent annual charges on all payments made in the first two years. This charge is permanent, only decreasing on subsequent contributions.

Other companies will boast that their charges are very low over the lifetime of a policy. This is done by boosting the fund with extra payments after, say, 15 or 20 years, up to retirement. But again, most people halt payments early and will never receive the bonus.

Some firms even penalise people who stop payments, through unem-

ployment for example, and want to start them up again when they find new jobs. In all these cases those who halt contributions in the early years, usually the majority of policyholders, will be hit hardest.

Obscure charges explained in pure gobbledegook ensure that people fail to spot what is being done to their money. John Chapman, whose research we publish exclusively, is a former Office of Fair Trading official responsible some years ago for forcing companies to divulge their charges for the first time.

He uses insurers' own figures to demonstrate the effects of charges on our money. This is a frightening story. It shows how far further the insurance industry has to go before it can truly claim to be serving the public's interests rather than its own.

Nic Cicutti

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pensions

SATURDAY 5 APRIL 1997 • THE INDEPENDENT LONG WEEKEND

The ABC of good value

John Chapman on how to rank the companies

Ratings

Our analysis uses data recently made available on lapse rates and charges that at last allows a demonstration of what is really happening to the pensions industry's customers.

This information is now published by the industry's regulator, the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), every year. The PIA also requires companies to give details of how their products match at various subsequent stages before they finally mature.

The real value of any pension plan can therefore be assessed by looking at the returns it provides for the investor in the early years, at the midway stage and at maturity. However, so far only the first two years' lapse rates are published.

Until recently, companies were able to sell pensions by pointing to the potentially high returns paid out at maturity 25 years away. But the alarming fact that springs out of the data is that many companies offering such apparently good returns levy very high charges on those who give up their payments early, in many cases the majority of their clients.

I have developed a system that grades the performance of a policy, based on a rating of A, B and C. This system, adopted by *Money Marketing*, the specialist weekly magazine, was the basis of the investigation into life insurance charges published by *The Independent* last autumn.

The system rates companies on how much they pay back investors, or give in pension transfer value, in the early stages of a policy, part way through it and at maturity.

First, the system rates a company's past performance, based on the amount paid at the three stages. The same calculations are done again, based on the company's own projections of future payouts.

Since charges are taken as the dominant factor, the projections assume that every company has the same investment performance. Variations in the results are therefore a short cut to showing the differences in charges at each stage.

But instead of relying on a confusing array of numbers, we use a letter to denote the best and worst providers.

In the more sophisticated model, adopted by *Money Marketing*, the ABC list is broken down further, from A+, the best, down to C-, the worst. A company with an A++A++A++ rating is excellent at every stage.

A rating of CAA or CCA means a policyholder will be treated badly on early surrender but well if the policy is kept to maturity. The letters are allocated by calculating how far a company deviates from the midpoint of all the companies in the category.

The top handful of companies in the main and summary tables are those where good future projections are matched by past performance.

In the rest of each table, the rankings are based on companies' projections of future charges alone.

This method for comparing performance between companies involved calculations carried out for *Money Marketing* by KPMG, the chartered accountancy and actuarial firm.

It is used here in conjunction with additional lapse statistics called from PIA.

For example, imagine a pension provider that levies very high charges on those who lapse early. Suppose that company also has a very high proportion of policyholders who lapse their policies early.

The company may as a result make the bulk of its profit not from those who stay the course but from those who give up early. In extreme cases, it may therefore have a vested interest in selling unsuitable policies to people who are unlikely to continue payments to retirement.

The box opposite shows how charges can be manipulated to suit a company's marketing campaign. For example, a company that levies very high charges and penalties on those who lapse early may use part of the money to pay higher amounts to those who keep their policies to maturity.

This is in effect a cross subsidy. The important point is that it allows the company to display attractively competitive maturity values in its marketing literature. Few realise this is achieved by penalising those who leave early.

And of course, if most leave early, the good maturity value is deeply misleading because so few receive it.

The good, The bad.....

Company Group	Lapses by year 2 (%)	Break-even year	Transfer value at year 2 (%)	Company group	Lapses by year 2	Break-even year	Transfer value at year 2
A companies				B companies			
C companies				C companies			

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15 من الأصل

The price of leaving

John Chapman lists the providers that take in more than they pay out

Information about lapse rates has been emerging gradually since the early 1990s, when research by Nick Anderton, who works for the independent actuarial firm AKG, began to find that unexpectedly high levels of people stopped contributions in policies within a year or two of starting them.

The latest survey by the Personal Investment Authority (December 1996) confirms that high lapse rates are continuing. About 25 per cent of pension plans sold in 1993 by company representatives had lapsed two years later.

With independent financial advisers (IFAs) lapses were lower, but still substantial, at 15 per cent. Even within the 25 per cent average figure, there were wide variations between individual companies, with some approaching 40 per cent after two years.

Lapses of personal pension plans were actually higher on average in 1994 than 1993, so as yet there is no improving trend.

As for lapse rates after years one and two, the position is uncertain. One leading company suggested 5 per cent per year was low, yet 7.5 per cent might be too high. Another company assumes 6 per cent per year. A leading consultant says he would opt for 10 per cent, while the industry would argue for 8 per cent a year.

In my calculations, I have

Lapse rates

assumed a reasonably conservative 8 per cent a year lapse rate in year three for company representatives, and 6 per cent thereafter. I have also assumed 6 per cent from year three onwards for sales of pensions by IFAs. Given the inflated lapses I have described, such as moving to a company pension scheme or becoming unemployed, these assumptions may well be on the cautious side.

With this information, it is possible to list the pension providers likely to have the largest number of plans which take in more money than they pay out.

Table 1A refers to unit-linked policies, where the value of a policy is linked more directly to stock market investments. Table 1B refers to with-profits policies, a type of "smoothed" investment where annual bonuses are added to a policy plus a terminal bonus at maturity.

The second column shows the number of years a policy has to be held before the transfer value reaches the value of the premiums paid in. The third column shows the "projected transfer value" at year two for a £100 a month premium, assuming a 9 per cent growth in investments. A projected transfer value is the figure given by a company as the amount it would move

Winners and losers					
Company averages	Policies losing (%)	Average "loss" of losing policies (%)	HMG share (%)	Average "true costs" of losing policies (%)	
Companies	Estimated Premiums (£m)	New Policies ('000)	Losing Policies ('000)	"Losses" (£m)	HMG Costs (£m)
					"True costs" (£m)

into another pension policy if requested by the client.

Some companies argue that it is unfair to use this figure because the actual "paid-up" value of the policy if left with the original pension provider would be greater. Yet few are willing to give the paid-up value instead - and of those that do, the figures are often similar.

The companies are divided into A, B and C groups according to the rating of their year-two projected "transfer value".

With-profits policyholders with one of the C companies, Abbey Life, would not break even before year 10. Among other prominent names

appearing in the C groups are Sun Life, Allied Dunbar and Scottish Equitable.

Losses on unit-linked plans in this group average £1,535 for transfers at year two, after premiums payments of £100 per month. Yet the majority of the A companies have no losing plans after year three, and even at year two, the losses on transfer average only £125. These are only averages and the discrepancy between these extremes is enormous.

The next stage of the analysis is to use the lapse rates for later years, as described above, to look at the total cost and numbers of lapses in

all the years up to a policy's break-even point.

The average losses can be calculated by comparing the projected transfer values for each year, together with the premiums paid, taking into account the impact of the lapses each year.

Tables 2 and 3 show the extent of the damage to planholders' interests. For example, 45 per cent of C group unit-linked policyholders are losers, when put in more in premiums than the values they are given. Their average loss is £943. But only 20 per cent of unit-linked policies in category A lead to losses after this period, and only by an average of £94.

continue to be applied on those years' payments however long the policy lasts for.

Tax relief is granted to personal pension contributions at the marginal (higher) rate of tax paid. In effect, if you make a contribution of £100, the taxman chips in £23 (from 5 April). If you are on the 40 per cent band, you reclaim the additional 17 per cent from the Revenue.

Relief bails pensions out

Treasury is subsidising many schemes

Tax

More than £4.5bn of contributions into personal pension funds in 1995/96 came from tax and National Insurance rebates, almost twice the amount paid in by policyholders, according to Inland Revenue figures.

Revenue statistics for the tax year ending 5 April 1996 show that holders of personal pensions paid in £2.35bn in contributions against £2.1bn in tax rebates and £2.43bn of National Insurance rebates.

Let us assume that such tax relief averages 30 per cent across all planholders, so that premiums of £100 attract tax relief of £30 a year.

Such relief can serve to offset the losses arising in policies. When these are low, the tax relief may easily cover them. Even with the higher losses arising from the C group, relief may meet 66 per cent of the losses, as shown in Table 2. With some companies the losses may be so high that any tax relief may only meet 50 per cent of them.

These extraordinary figures suggest a large part of pension fund managers' income is ultimately funded by the government in foregone taxes rather than directly by policyholders. The Treasury is in effect financing the losses resulting from the questionable activities of many pension plan providers - high charges and high lapse rates.

Another aspect must be considered. If the pension plan market was as transparent and well understood as it should be, purchasers would go for the lowest charges and higher transfer values. Even if they did lapse they would lose little. Instead, purchasers buy or, more accurately, are sold policies with high charges and poor transfer values. It is

possible to estimate how much purchasers lose by not choosing the best policies in terms of low charges.

These "true costs" are also shown in Table 2, with a losing unit-linked C group policy having on average a true cost of £1,411. Such estimates indicate the costs arising on lapsed policies from not investing in lower-charging companies. The overall totals of losing policies, of related tax relief and of true costs are shown in table 3.

Taking sales of new premiums of £1.083bn (the 1996 figures), the annual number of new policies is estimated at 903,000. Of these, some 307,000 will show losses on transfer. These total £212m a year, at a cost to the government of £157m in tax relief. Interestingly, some of it will be clawed back by the government as taxes on the income of the pension finally paid at maturity. Meanwhile, the companies themselves will have been subsidised in their heavy charges by the taxman's generosity.

This, it has previously been argued, is not a cost to the general taxpayer but a rebate that goes into the individual's pension. But rebates on pensions are paid elsewhere from within the tax system.

The consequence of such support could be even more serious when taken together with the Government's recent Basic Pension Plus proposal. Last month, plans were announced to scrap the basic state pension and replace it with a £9 per week payment into personal pensions over every person's working lifetime. But the Government won't offer the same generous rebates to personal pension holders. Unless companies cut their charges, the value of pensions in early years will not be subsidised in the same way.

Getting to grips with personal pensions means wading through reams of gobbledegook. Here is a handy guide to the most common jargon.

With profits describes pensions which pay an annual bonus to investors which cannot be taken away. At maturity, a terminal bonus is attached. The aim is to "smooth" investment performance.

Unit-linked policies match stock

What? How to decipher the gobbledegook

market performance more closely. They can deliver higher returns over the longer term, but involve investors taking more risks.

Transfer values are given when you decide to switch your pension fund from one provider to another. They often involve further charges,

so the transfer value of a policy is sometimes less than the actual value of the fund.

Paid-up values are those that refer to the value of a policy if contributions are halted and the policy is allowed to run until maturity.

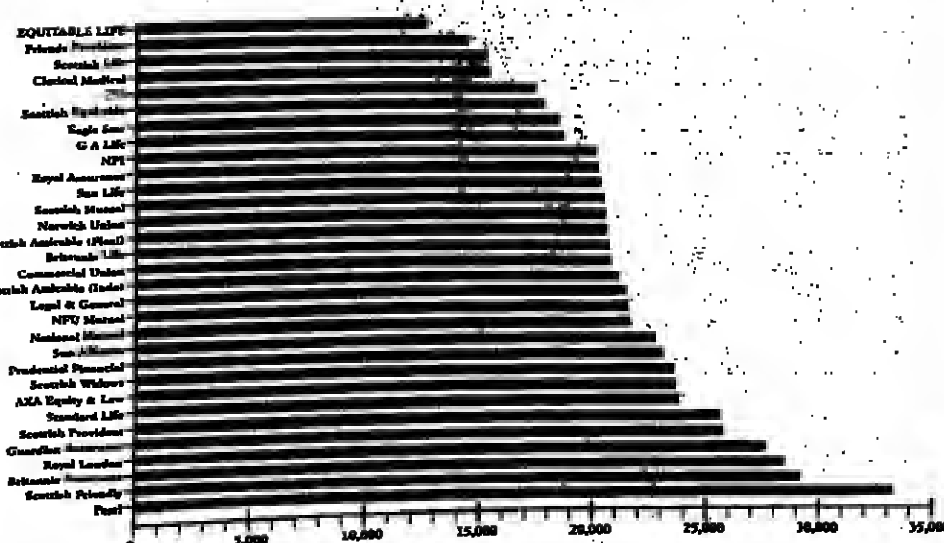
Lapses are not a new definition of

absent-mindedness. They refer to people who halt contributions for a variety of reasons.

Initial or capital units are the term for charges levied on the first few years' contributions into a pension. These are much higher than subsequent contributions and will

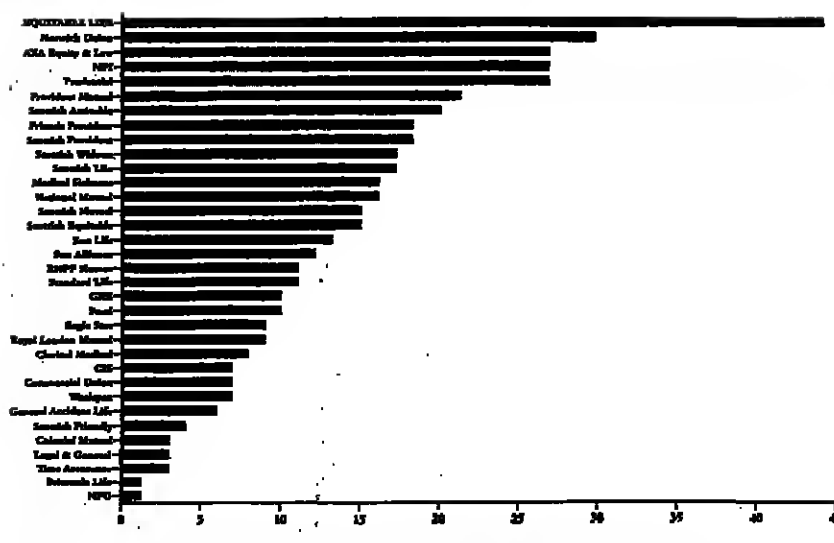
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HOW MUCH YOU ARE CHARGED



The effect of charges (£)

INVESTMENT TRACK RECORD



No. of Top Ten Appearances 1974-1996
Source: Planned Savings survey of regular contribution with-profits personal pension plans, 1974-1996

Choosing a personal pension plan is not an easy task. Superficially, many plans can look similar, so what factors should you consider when making your choice?

Price, performance and flexibility are perhaps the key indicators that will enable you to differentiate the wheat from the chaff.

PRICE

All companies are now required to disclose to potential buyers the cost of investments such as personal pension plans. Comparing the charges made by different companies can be quite revealing.

The chart above left compares the effect of the charges made by various companies to recoup such costs as commission, remuneration and administration for a £200 pm, 20 year regular contribution with-

profits personal pension plan. Source: Money Management, October 1996.

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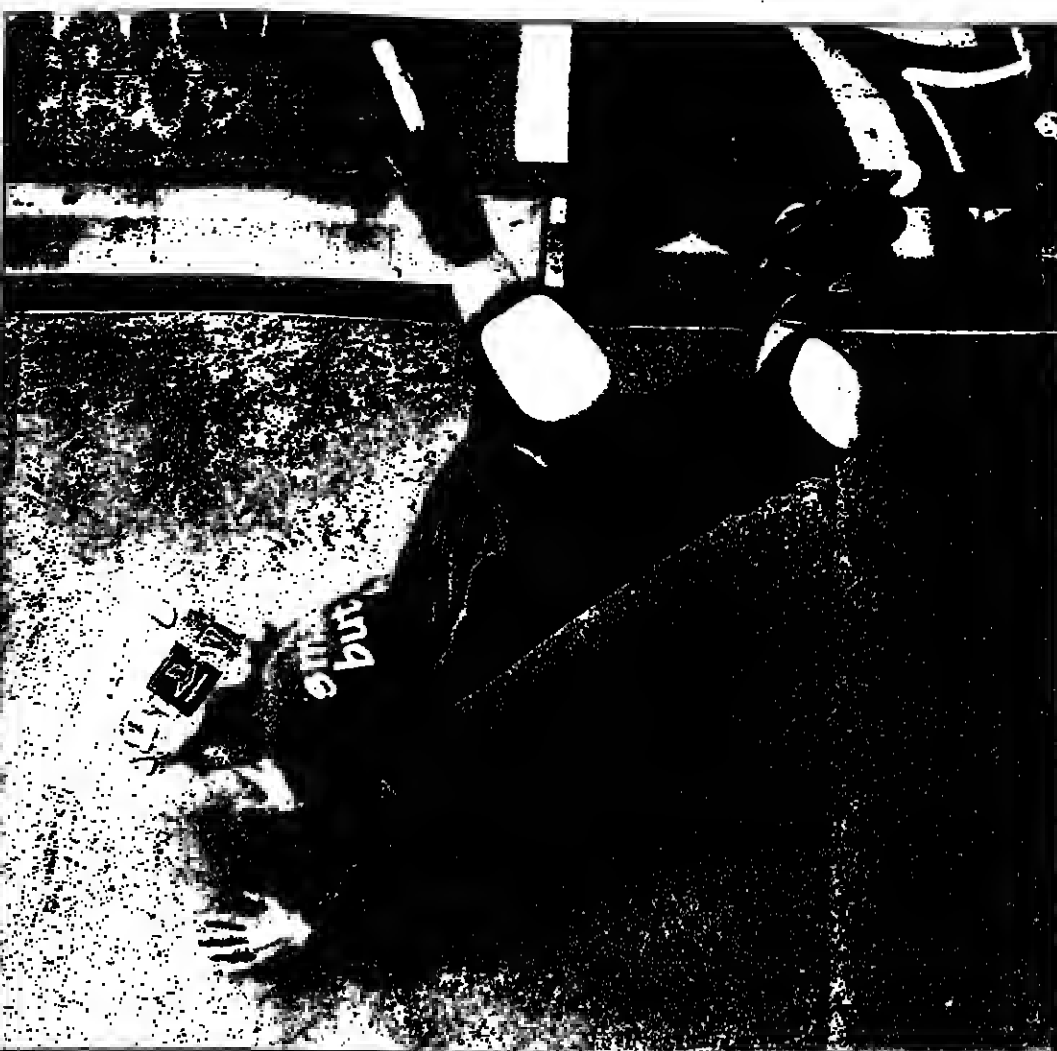
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Smart moves: stay ahead by opting for the right pension now

PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD WEBB

A policy to take up

Questions to ask

It would be easy, after reading how personal pension charges can leave you worse off, to refuse to have anything to do with retirement planning. Easy, but also a mistake. Increasingly, putting something aside for the day you finally stop work is vital to ensuring a decent income after retirement.

Personal pensions, where you are in control of how much you pay in each year, are often essential, particularly where you do not have the luxury of a company scheme to join. While many private providers do penalise those who start personal pensions and are then forced to halt their contributions, others do not.

The whole purpose of these tables is to show not just those who are bad for your wealth in retirement, but also the better ones. Choosing the right pension is often a matter of doing the right homework, asking the right questions and opting for the company that gives the right answers. Here are some issues to discuss with a prospective provider.

What does it cost to pay premiums each month? Look for companies that levy little or nothing for each premium, whether it is monthly or one-off payments. Good compa-

Retirement still needs planning, so invest some time to find a suitable scheme, writes Nic Cicutti

nies will charge no more than £2 to £4 per payment, or 3 to 4 per cent. What are the annual charges? Look for companies that charge 1 per cent or less each year.

How are charges levied? Some companies will tell you that their average annual charges are 1 per cent or slightly higher. What they do not tell you is that their average is low because they sting you heavily upfront, only lessening the load after five or 10 years. Look for a company that has flat-rate charges. Most important, never choose a firm where the adviser cannot explain properly how the charges are levied.

Is the independent adviser (always choose one of them) prepared to cut his or her commission, or accept a fee? Aim to pay no more than £300 to £400 to set up a simple, uncomplicated pension. This is equivalent to about three or four hours' work.

How flexible is the pension? Unless you are very unusual, you will work for several different employers in your lifetime, some of them with occupational pension

schemes you should join. You may get divorced or lose your job, or have children or want to increase or cut your contributions. Choose a pension that allows you to do these things without extra charges.

Should you pay single or regular contributions? With regular premiums, the adviser will receive upfront commission based on the expected period of your contributions. This takes a large slice of your first two years' payments. Single premiums mean the adviser gets about 4 to 5 per cent of everything you pay in but no more. Choose this option, or something called a "recurring single premium" pension, where every payment counts as a one-off.

Despite all these warnings, you may still be bamboozled. This is the fault of companies and some advisers who still try to sell you. If you believe this is deliberate, blank them out.

An increasingly important part of the personal pensions scene is recent arrival of companies which sell their products over the telephone. This allows for significant economies of

scale, which can be passed on. Moreover, it means that providers must simplify their products so they can be easily understood. In most cases, their pensions offer a far better deal than traditional companies.

Among the lowest-charging are Virgin, Eagle Star, Fidelity, Scottish Widows, Merchant Investors, Equitable Life, Standard Life, Nationwide, PensionStore. Most of these sell by telephone.

Other firms are moving away from the more expensive pensions they sold and are focusing on newer products. Sun Alliance, Scottish Mutual, TSB and even Midland Bank are worth a look here. Among the average-charging contracts worth looking at is Abbey National.

Get details from several of them. Many allow premiums to be made singly, as described above. This makes them cheaper than regular premium pension contracts.

If you are unsure about which pension to choose, talk to an independent adviser. Ask for cost comparisons based on the same premiums paid in. Don't fall for the line that performance is key. This only applies on rare occasions. Most of the time price is the key. Once you have details of charges you can check past performances, before opting for the right pension.

Measures for a better future



A target to aim for: a decent pension allows for an active retirement

PHOTOGRAPH: PETER MACDIARMID

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*Source: Money Marketing, Oct 1996. Only applicable to investors taken out through Eagle Star's telephone centre.



Failure to act now will cause suffering for millions

Personal pensions were sold as the solution to the inflexibility and potentially low returns on offer to members of occupational schemes who switched jobs regularly. In reality, going private is likely to cost millions of people extremely dear.

In many cases, they should never have been sold a personal pension in the first instance, as the mis-selling scandal of recent years has shown.

Even for those for whom a personal pension may have been appropriate, personal pensions may turn out to be a nightmare.

The pensions industry may argue that investment performance is key to the success of a personal pension and the fund built up within it. But, as we know, there is nothing fixed about good fund performance. A good fund three years ago, when you started your pension, may well decline tomorrow – or even a year after you started paying into it.

The tangible sum in the equation is the impact of charges on a fund's final payout, whether it is invested well or otherwise.

The industry may also argue that many lapsing policies are not

The solution

transferred, and that paid-up policies kept with the same company would be worth more. This is a valid point, perhaps, for some companies. But it is also true that unexpected new charges often arise in these cases. In any case, will the industry publish its paid-up values and associated charges to prove the point? This is unlikely.

In reality, the life insurance industry is a questionable vehicle for personal pension plans, with its tradition of over selling, with its high costs and obscure charges. The industry practice of "front-end loading" of charges is a root cause of the damage done to a very large number of policyholders.

What could the industry's watchdogs do? Regulators could place much more emphasis on the combined impact of charging structure and lapse rates. They could also require the disclosure of paid-up values on policies where premiums are stopped but the fund is kept with the same company.

The media can help in clearing this up. It can emphasise how losses can be

avoided by opting for companies with low charges and high transfer values. The more league tables are published the better – preferably with rating systems that allow people to understand at a glance what happens to their money in the early years. The Independent grasped this point some time ago.

Finally, the government must consider carefully whether it should continue to finance much of the cost of the industry's failures. Perhaps the next chancellor could examine whether to remove pension tax relief for all companies that provide transfer values of less than 90 per cent in the first two years of the premiums paid in.

That could quickly bring about the restructuring and improvement of products needed if this industry is to be accepted as providing a boon for retirement, rather than a scam at the expense of planholders and taxpayers.

One thing is certain: without policies to stop this pension scandal, millions of people will continue to suffer in years to come for this failure to act now.

John Chapman

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125 من الأصل

Andrew Verity explains the gamble involved if stocks fall

FTSE grows by more than 4 per cent in three months. Mr Ewan stresses that 55 per cent of the time since 1985, the FTSE has grown by less than 4 per cent. But when it grows by more than 4 per cent, sober returns are the price you pay for the "G"



Three beds. All mod cons. And spire

Large, airy, beautifully crafted – Victorian churches are ripe for residential conversion. Serena Mackesy visits one in Preston

o St Mark's Square, Preston, Lancs, an oasis of turn-of-the-century terraces close to the city centre, stands a fine square-cut Victorian Gothic church, with rose windows and an imposing tower. But it has no vicar and no congregation; the church, whose foundation stone was laid on its saint's day, 25 April, in 1862, has been standing empty since 1983. No longer. The formerly hallowed walls of St Mark's now play host to 25 flats, designed by the Fletcher Smith partnership.

Churches, like people, get made redundant from time to time. This is not necessarily a reflection of the times. There are many reasons: amalgamation of parishes, alterations in the local population or character, or simply that the cost of upkeep becomes greater than that of making and maintaining a whole new building. It happens less often than one would think: only 25 churches were declared redundant in 1996; the Church of England still has nearly 16,000 parish buildings in regular use, and a new congregation starts up in the Church of England every fortnight. The picture of a Britain riddled with empty churches is far from accurate. Nonetheless, the buildings exist, and finding a new use for them is preferable to dereliction.

Conversion is not a simple matter, though: ask any Evangelist. Michael Catterall, managing director of Park View Homes, the company responsible for the St Mark's development, has gone through a good deal to bring his plans to fruition. Planning permission was just the start. "I suspect that one or two planning applications

had been submitted before ours," he says, "but they never seemed to get off the ground. The whole thing at the end of the day has to be viable for somebody to take it on. I think that's probably why there are so many churches left standing without anybody doing anything to them: there are so many restrictions put on by the ancient monuments societies and English Heritage and the other bodies that have to be consulted."

He obtained consent and bought St Mark's in August 1993, but he wasn't out of the woods yet. In November that year, his bank got cold feet and withdrew its support. "I bought the church for £40,000 originally, but after the problems with the bank, I had to buy it back for £200,000," he says. In 1995, after raising the money from other sources, work restarted.

It's been worth it, though. The final product is light and characterful with a host of detail: curved hammer beams in yellow pine with a fabulous grain; arts-and-crafts embellishments, warm natural stone. The tower contains a three-bedroom flat with roughly 1,500 square feet of floor area. An apse apartment is graced by a ceiling, said to be Italian in design, whose curved rib beams are covered, where they interconnect, with carved acorns and oak apples, vine leaves and grape clusters. Flats radiate off a central atrium at the point where the transepts spread out and the nave starts. This atrium runs all the way up through the building, and natural light comes in through skylights in the roof. All mod cons, but you never forget the building's origins.



You never forget the building's origins: St Mark's, Preston, under conversion PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG EASTON

The locals are, apparently, happy about the development. A derelict church, of course, can't be a great asset to an area, and the Church Commissioners' structures on declaring a church redundant ("deconsecration") is not, apparently, a C of E term, include considerable parochial and public consultation. Not all churches, of course, are appropriate for residential use. "I've looked at one or two others, but they've not really been suitable for conversion because of the location of the windows," says Michael Catterall. "We have skylights in the roof, and put in more for the ground floor: eight in the nave, another two in the

transepts, and three more in the apse. The nave windows started two-and-a-half metres above ground, with string courses, we slotted the windows in underneath that."

Another advantage of St Mark's was that it had no graveyard. One of the more lurid images of church conversion is the idea of graveyards being ripped open, but according to the Church Commissioners this does not happen. Mostly, graveyards are kept out of the sale, though occasionally part of one may be included, usually simply to provide access to the building. But this is certainly overdone in ground with new burials, and existing graves have to be tended and

respected, though occasionally the stones are moved. The land itself remains consecrated. If someone is buried in consecrated ground they remain in consecrated ground.

On the anniversary of the laying of St Mark's foundation stone (25 April), the final 18 flats in the development go on sale. They vary from one to three bedrooms, and cost between £40,000 and £100,000. And thrown in with the price is a slice of history and all the care taken by craftsmen who were originally building for the glory of God.

For details call Michael or Ve Catterall on 01772 200602

Three on view

Church conversions



Church House, at Caldecote, near Peterborough, formerly the church of St Mary Magdalene, was last used for church services in the Sixties. It was converted into a home in 1988. The house is Grade II* listed, and is now a four-bedroom house with stone mullioned windows. A timber spiral staircase leads to the first floor and to a gallery bedroom, and most rooms have exposed roof beams. A garden of almost half an acre is included. £240,000 through Savills (01780 766222)



The former Methodist church in Peasmarsh, near Rye in East Sussex, has planning consent to turn it into a three- or four-bedroom home with two enormous reception rooms. It is being sold with restrictive covenants – these are common to most ecclesiastical buildings – which forbids use for the sale of alcohol, as a dance hall, for gambling or for religious purposes. There is an enclosed courtyard garden, and room to build a garage. Agent Phillips & Stubbs is asking £68,000. (01797 227338)



The Parish Church of St Michael and All Angels was built by French and American prisoners of war between 1810 and 1814. The stained glass in the east window is in memory of them, especially the 218 who died. Conversion of the Grade II* listed building is subject to a number of restraints, partly because of its historical importance – it was an appendage to the nearby Dartmoor Prison – and because access will have to be sought from the Duchy of Cornwall. It is in disrepair and will, says the agent, need a skilled architect and expert builders. The fittings will be removed, but some furnishings can be bought separately. Offers around £40,000, to Michelmores Hughes (01803 665116).

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The woodbegoods

Helen Lewis has a dream of owning a wood

Buying your own patch of land as an investment – and as a bit of space you can call your own – has become increasingly popular for those with a bit of spare cash. You buy, not to build but to manage nature. And, for my part, the thought of owning a small area of woodland has a distinct appeal. But how do I set about it? Don't get me wrong, I am no sentimentalist intent on giving nature a free hand to run amok. My aim is a well maintained area of mixed hardwood trees interspersed with paths and the odd clearing to sit in for family picnics. I want to cut firewood for my log burner at weekends, but still provide a haven for wildlife. I understand that this is the basis of environmental woodland management, but I need some sound advice.

My first port of call is to Chris and Ann Hughes, who have impeccable qualifications for advising anyone with an interest in woodland. Together they run a centre for instructing practical woodland skills and advise on woodland conservation for the Countryside Commission for Wales. They also own a small wood – and have learnt a great deal from their own experience.

Nine years ago, Chris and Ann bought 10 acres of mixed deciduous woodland, once a conifer plantation which had been felled during the war, burnt over in readiness for the next crop of trees, then never replanted. The conifers did not regenerate naturally and deciduous trees took over.

only get into it in one corner – so one had to be touched for more than 30 years. However, with patience, careful planning and a lot of hard work we have created a pleasant, stable environment," explains Ann.

Looking around their wood, I am struck by the variety of tree species. Oak, ash, sycamore, poplar, alder, willow, lime, holly and field maple all thrive in a relatively small area surrounded by hedges of indigenous blackthorn, hazel, hawthorn and bird cherry. This was just what I was looking for, but where do I find my own leafy sanctuary, and how will I put a realistic value on it?

"A land agent is the best source, but try local estate agents, too," Ann advises. "The sale particulars will contain a description of where the wood is, its aspect, the main tree species within it, their age, and the woodland's potential – the yield class."

This gives a guide to the productive capacity, how much timber per hectare you can expect each year, with it continuing to produce the same amount. Obviously, if the timber is valuable then the asking price will be higher," she explains.

However, Chris points out, the ultimate value is what a wood is worth to the person buying, and not everyone has the same reasons for purchasing. "Some people acquire a wood because they look out of their window on to it every day and want control over what happens to it, while others just want a piece of wood for environmental reasons. There are those who buy woodland just because it is a

relatively inexpensive form of land investment, whereas others have plans for the trees' productivity and want to make their mark on the landscape."

Whatever the reason for buying, access is an important consideration. Before buying my wood I must decide whether timber-felling and tree-thinning are going to be done by myself with my Land Rover and trailer, or by a contractor who will want to bring tractors and possibly lorries in. At the very least I will need a gated entrance, somewhere to park, and paths to walk round. And being a novice, I will also need a plan of action.

"Once you have purchased, contact the local forestry authority and ask for the private woodlands officer. He will survey your wood – free of charge – and advise on a five-year management strategy and the available grants."

Chris brings the discussion around to the matter of insurance. "In exactly the same way as owning a house or any other piece of land, you must have third-party insurance on a piece of woodland because you may be liable if someone has an accident, especially if you have a dangerous tree which should have previously been removed."

Achieving anything worthwhile with a piece of woodland, I am told, is a long-term commitment. Take the endless free advice available, be prepared for a winter storm to ruin your best plans – and leave room to adapt.

Chris and Ann Hughes, Woodland Skills Training Centre, 01597860574

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TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ TODAY'S



Serena Mackesy
In my week

It's not cheap being a hippie. It's not just the colon cleansing: every holistic therapy costs an arm and a leg

Testimonials: they're important to any business. Here are some testimonials for Arise and Shine Herbs Ltd's "Clean-me-out" programme. "A large cyst, very painful, had been growing in one of my breasts for seven years, it dissolved by the end of my first seven days... painful, swollen areas of my colo got unblocked. Four inches vanished from my waistline... lots of goopy, strange (chemical odour) green stuff came out at 1.30am. My menstrual periods are now perfectly in time with the New Moon... I'll keep cleansing until I'm totally renewed."

The boys were fascinated by Arise and Shine. They stood there, staring at the stall and reading the literature for half an hour, jaws hanging loose, going "my God" while I juggled at their sleeves and whined about wanting to go and get my aura photographed. Boys - and bowls. They just can't get enough, can they? I blame Geoffrey Chaucer, myself.

The stall was certainly an arresting sight. Sitting in a white-painted corridor at the Festival of Holistic Living, among the palmists and Indian head massages, its displays grabbed everyone who came within 30ft and stopped them in their tracks. It was the photos that did it. The photos were fantastic. I swear, the Saatchi Gallery would pay six figures for them.

Which were pinned to a notice-board for us all to see. Damien Hirst, this one's for you. It's not cheap being a hippie. It's not just the colon cleansing: every holistic therapy costs an arm and a leg. I'm not entirely sure what a chakra is, but it must be something big because getting it cleaned costs as much as having all the carpets in my flat done did the other day. I don't mean to sound cynical.



Obviously everyone feels much better with a shiny chakra. But once you've laid out £49.99 on a tie-dye T-shirt which cost £1.70 when I left India, you're not going to have a whole lot of cash left over for incense.

The Battersea Grand Hall had a strange air of school fête about it: not the school I went to, where fêtes consisted of little girls seeping at each other's ooo-uniform clothes, but the school I want to send my children to. They'll certainly get an education. Along with a tarot reading, an energy ball and a nice reflecting bookmark which tells you all about your ommerological personality. I am a 12, which means that I love to travel and will gather a huge (sic) variety of knowledge over the years.

I wandered on. A woman came up and started rubbing me with a ladybird. Well, actually it was a lump of wood with six little prongs, but it had been painted red with black spots and it felt very nice. "That's nice," I said. "How much are they?" "£6.95," she said. "And the little ones are £4.95. Or you can have the two for £10." Hah, I

thought: it can't work, it doesn't cost enough. "I'll think about it," I said, and went over to finger the incense. A couple of hippies drifted up next to me. The number of rings in their noses made me start wondering about my own wimp factor. "You know, I was thinking," he said, "about that geopathic reverser. I bet there's a load of polluted energy flows at your mum's. Maybe we ought to get one."

"How much are they?" she asked. "£39. But you don't need to plug it in or anything. It works off crystals." "Humm. Maybe. Let's go back and look at them again."

Then I met Lynda. I liked Lynda. She was a psychic and she only cost £25. I sat down and committed a

terrible faux pas by trying to pay her first. She took my hand. "Humm," she said. "You're very attractive to foreign men, then." I was hooked. Absolutely. "You've got to stop striking things out," she said. "You do that all the time, and it's a really bad idea. And that guy, know he keeps coming back, but you're letting him get in the way. Don't worry, he'll always be part of your life, but you're going to be able to push him to the side soon and look at other people."

When I left Lynda, I felt all glowy. Went to find the boys. They were still standing by A&S Herbs, reading a book called "Cleanse and Purify Yourself" by Dr Richard Anderson, ND NMD. "How was your reading?" said Nicky. "Lovely, thank you. I'm going to sleep with someone foreign." Nicky's eyes rolled to heaven. "And?" he said. I took the book from his hands, started reading the blurb on the dust jacket. "I discovered this course after an initial period spent on another colonic cleansing programme," it said. "After two weeks, I dropped it like a hot potato." At which point I had to sit down.

Pandering to pedantic pleasures

They were talking dirty on Word of Mouth this week (Radio 4, Tuesday). They were also talking about sex, but that's beside the point. Word of Mouth panders to a different set of base instincts - the low pleasures of pedantry. There are people who go through life clenching their teeth every time they hear "presently" used to mean "at present", their indignation bountifully stoked by infinitives split, participles dangled, sentences ended with prepositions. To these tortured, suppressed souls, Busty Madame, Mature and Proud Of It - well, Russell Davies - Offers Relief. In the comfort of his boudoir, you can air all those thoughts you never dared utter.

This is probably unfair, both to Davies, who is for the most part a wise and tolerant commentator on language, and to his listeners, many of whom do doubt have a perfectly healthy, open attitude to grammar, happy to answer their children's questions about gerunds, to parse freely and frankly in public. But I've harboured a deep suspicion of the Word of Mouth audience ever since the time, a couple of years back, that they voted Enoch Powell the best living speaker of English, spell-bound by his rigid adherence to grammatical rules and completely ignoring the dirge monotone in which his thoughts are embodied. I'm not encouraged by the fact that an inaudible "shit" from Anna Ford on Today can practically jam the BBC switchboard and make headlines in the press.

I suppose these people deserve our sympathy as much as our condemnation: to set such store by artificially constructed rules of language is odd, to say the least, and it suggests that what is going on is a powerful sublimation of other anxieties - about class and social change, mainly. It would be worth knowing whether the



Robert Hanks
The week on radio

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BBC gets more complaints about language at times of political uncertainty.

But it's surely not right to pander to these fears by inviting contributions to "The People's Lexicon". This is a list of approved and reviled tropes to be nominated by listeners - in effect, a kind of linguistic "Readers' Wives" page. And though it was a joy to hear Frank Delaney on the air again, after a long absence through illness, it would have been nicer if he hadn't been putting up a daft defence of the subjunctive, on the grounds that it is a mood that offers a sense of possibility unattainable with the plain old indicative. The implication seemed to be that the 98 per cent of the English-speaking world who wouldn't know a subjunctive were it (quote the construction) to tap them on the shoulder and ask them the time must lack imagination.

More sublimated social anxieties in Ip Dip Doo (Radio 2, Wednesday), in which Georgina Boyes confronted the myth that the modern child has abandoned old-fashioned playground games in favour of computer games. In fact, the programme demonstrated that children's games are remark-

able for their longevity - the most telling example being a clapping game which amalgamated a popular song of the 1940s with the old favourite "It's raining, it's pouring, the old man's snoring": this must have been passed down through at least 10 generations of primary school children. Boyes suggested that this is the equivalent of an adult folk-song surviving since the early 18th century.

Of course, folk-songs don't survive this long, largely because they are sung by people with irritating vocal voices; and a promising programme was ruined by the inclusion of several examples of this. These have roughly the effect on me that split infinitives have on other people, but don't run away with the idea that this is some sort of sublimation. Sometimes hatred can be pure.

The news that Martin Bell's series "The Truth Is Our Currency" was being postponed came too late to stop it being reviewed here last week. Apologies for any confusion, and snooks cocked at the BBC for withdrawing a programme about bias in the news at the very moment when the issue most demands consideration.

Turn off, retune, drop out

Which of these quiz shows offers the most depressing proof that Pearson TV had no need to be let anywhere near the last terrestrial wavelength? Is it (a) 100% (CS, every weekday); (b) Whistle (CS, every weekday); (c) This and Fins (CS, Wed); or (d) Being Me the Head of Light Entertainment (CS, Thur)? Answer: all of the above.

Channel 5 has been working hard all week to tell jokes against itself before anyone else can. "Everything to play for," said our host Tony Slattery at the end of This and Fins, a dimly snuffy medical quiz show. "In fact, nothing to play for, because of the budget."

100% even makes a virtue of the precarious state of the channel's finances, dispensing with the services (and salary) of a host altogether. Which gives it slightly more personality than Whistle, hosted by Tim Vine.

Bring Me the Head of Light Entertainment enshrines another joke against the channel in a programme title, as the head of light entertainment basically heads the whole channel. You can ignore the inaugural night, which misleadingly suggested that there is a budget for drama. Even if there were, the right scheduling structure that is the channel's unique selling point would find no



Jasper Rees
The week on television

place for Beyond Fear (Sun) on a normal night. Otherwise the movie would have to go, or the gardening game show, the travel show, the property show and all the other criminally unimaginative magazine formats that on any other terrestrial channel would run, out of harm's way, in mid-afternoon.

The exclamation mark at the end of Hospital! (Sun) announced a debt to the school of surreal slapstick patented by the A1planet people. So where does this leave Exclusive! (every weekday)? Rather than signalling even the merest iota of irony, the punctuation in this case betrays a fierce desperation to be noticed. In a luckier life, its host Julia Bradbury would have a sporting chance of finding an audience. But Exclusive! strands her on a

deserted set and forces her to hand out miserably gobbets of second-hand showbiz titillate. Still, it's better than Turnstyle (Sun), a sports report show that suffers from the fact that Channel 5 has access to almost no significant sporting events. For its first outing it was reduced to interviewing football fans out on location, and then in the studio, because the good thing about football fans is that you don't have to pay them.

Into this sea of mediocrity comes the clunkily titled Five News Including First on Five (every weekday). The programme's editor, we read, has warned his staff that they will get a bad reception, which has a nice symmetry to it, given that the viewers are getting bad reception too. The one thing you can say about Five News is that money has visibly been spent. Most of Channel 5's programmes limp so badly that they are beneath spoof, but here, at least, an effort has been made to create a style, albeit one that by some freakish reordering of the rota has already been spoofed by The Day Today and Brass Eye.

It's a depressing indictment of our national mindset that Kirsty Young, because beautiful and blonde, has been judged as intellectually incapable. She has perhaps

overcompensated, stripping away whatever charm she may possess to buttonhole the camera like someone with no sense of humour who wants to talk politics at a party. The other saving grace of Channel 5 is The Jack Docherty Show (Sun, and every weekday). Viewers may have trouble downizing their expectations for a show that can't be an event every night, or even any night, but Docherty has hit the track at pace and looks weirdly close to being a natural.

The in-joke on his show came in an item called "The Re-Tuners", a reference to the fact that by a random stroke of good luck half the nation has been deprived of adequate reception to Channel 5's squalid float-past of derivative junk. The mood of your reviewer improved perceptibly on about Tuesday evening, when his slightly wavy picture suddenly blew up into a snowstorm. Even as they continue to send re-tuners out to reclaim the television sets that are rejecting its material, Channel 5 is training up an army of declenchers charged with reconfiguring the buttocks of the few hundred thousand viewers who have pressed the "5" button by mistake. There is more padding on this station than all the cells in Broadmoor. Get better, or get off.

DAMIEN HURTS...and his painfully creative struggle

DAMIEN, DO YOU FIND THAT YOU OFTEN TAKE FROM OTHER ARTISTS? SOMETIMES.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT I GO TO GALLERIES, SEE WHAT'S AROUND THEN WALK AWAY WITH SOMETHING NEW.

EVEN IF IT IS ANOTHER ARTIST'S IDEA - FOR ME IT'S A MIND EXPANSION THING. IT OPENS ME UP TO NEW CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES.

SO WHY DID YOU STEAL THE PICASSO? FOR THE MONEY!

Neil Kerber

Whatever happened to? The GLC

New voice: The GLC (Greater London Council) is born in April 1964, with WG Fike as its first leader, replacing the London County Council, covering the same essential services but a larger area: 610 sq miles as "Greater" London.

Old conflicts: Power alternating between Conservative and Labour with Labour finally gaining a

majority in 1981. This brings London a new head in Ken Livingstone who earns himself the nickname "Red Ken" with some flamboyant decisions, including one to spend £44,000 on a charter for gay and lesbian rights. Propaganda of his own keeps his popularity high among Londoners, including a huge hot air balloon bearing the words "Working for London". Lord Bowness, chairman of the Tory-con-

trolled London Boroughs Association speaks out in favour of abolition. The final straw comes when banners are draped outside County Hall proclaiming the daily unemployment total. In 1986, the council is abolished.

New deal: A non-elected quango (the LEAC), 33 local councils and Whitehall take over. According

to an Association of London Authorities survey in 1993, four out of five Londoners want the GLC back. In 1996, Labour unveils plans for a city mayor and new authority.

Next step? Labour's election manifesto pledges a directly elected London authority. Will London get one? Only time will tell. James Aulfeast

WEATHER

The British Isles

General Summary and Outlook:

Scotland will start cloudy and blustery with bursts of rain and drizzle, especially in the north, although it will be quite mild with brighter spells in sheltered eastern spots. This afternoon the south will have some rain but northern counties will turn brighter and colder with sunny spells and wintry showers. Meanwhile Northern Ireland, northern England and north Wales will be cloudy and blowy with patchy light rain, but the rest of England and Wales should be mostly dry with a little warm sunshine in the east.

Tomorrow, drizzle in southern counties of England and Wales should soon die out to leave most of the UK fine and bright with sunny spells, although the odd wintry shower is likely in north-east Scotland. Despite the sunshine and light winds there will be a chill in the air and a widespread ground frost after dark. The first half of next week will be mostly fine and warm, but weak fronts will bring cloud and drizzle to western Scotland.

Europe and The World

Low W will come south-east below turning wet and falling. High T will come quickly south.

WORLD WEATHER YESTERDAY MIDDAY (GMT): c, cloudy; f, fog; h, high; l, low; m, mist; r, rain; s, sunny; t, thunder; v, variable; w, wind; w, wind; w, wind.

Area	Temp	Wind	Cloud	Temp	Wind	Cloud
London	12	10	10	12	10	10
Edinburgh	10	10	10	10	10	10
Birmingham	12	10	10	12	10	10
Manchester	12	10	10	12	10	10
Cardiff	12	10	10	12	10	10
Belfast	12	10	10	12	10	10
Stockholm	12	10	10	12	10	10
Oslo	12	10	10	12	10	10
Paris	12	10	10	12	10	10
Brussels	12	10	10	12	10	10
Amsterdam	12	10	10	12	10	10
Frankfurt	12	10	10	12	10	10
Berlin	12	10	10	12	10	10
Munich	12	10	10	12	10	10
Vienna	12	10	10	12	10	10
Zurich	12	10	10	12	10	10
Geneva	12	10	10	12	10	10
Basel	12	10	10	12	10	10
Stuttgart	12	10	10	12	10	10
Düsseldorf	12	10	10	12	10	10
Cologne	12	10	10	12	10	10
Dortmund	12	10	10	12	10	10
Essen	12	10	10	12	10	10
Duisburg	12	10	10	12	10	10
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Bielefeld	12	10	10	12	10	10
Paderborn	12	10	10	12	10	10
Bonn	12	10	10	12	10	10
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Aachen	12	10	10	12	10	10
Trier	12	10	10	12	10	10
Saarbrücken	12	10	10	12	10	10
Strasbourg	12	10	10	12	10	10
Nancy	12	10	10	12	10	10
Luxembourg	12	10	10	12	10	10
Brussels	12	10	10	12	10	10
Amsterdam	12	10	10	12	10	10
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Gerard Gilbert recommends *The Call of the Sea* Sat 8.10pm BBC2
The Ice House Sat, Sun 9pm BBC1

In *Macbeth on the Estate* (Sat BBC2), 130 people from Birmingham's Ladywood Estate are joined by some of Britain's "most promising young actors" for a contemporary urban-Night-Ten rendition of the Scottish Play. The concrete walkways and barren open spaces of Ladywood make rather a good setting, but you feel documentary-maker Penny Woolcock is more interested in these than a totally comprehensible interpretation of the Band

ITV/Regions

ANGLO
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (26:10:5), 1.05 Hindi News and Weather (27:25:41), 1.40 World of Wonder (79:36:56), 2.05 Baywatch (1:46:14:29), 3.00 Film: Carry On Heavily (97:10:40:56), 5.05 Anglo News, Sports and Weather (88:53:05), 11.50 Film: Downfall (58:53:05), 11.55 Film: The Long Arm (79:57:08), 2.50 Film: Shanghai Joe (49:57:23), 4.30 - 5.30pm Funky Bunker (17:96:4).

CENTRAL
As London except 12.30pm Premier (76:10:5), 1.05 Games and Videos (26:10:5), 1.05 HTV Wales News and Weather (27:25:41), 1.40 Eruphon! The Making of Dante's Peak (1:43:32:54), 2.10 Shuntimers (78:51:32), 3.00 Anglo (90:01:76:55), 3.55 Baywatch (59:12:11), 4.05 HTV Wales News and Sports (79:57:36:50), 11.50 Films: Downfall (58:53:05), 11.55 Film: The Long Arm (79:57:08), 2.50 Film: Shanghai Joe (49:57:23), 4.30 - 5.30pm Funky Bunker (17:96:4).

HTV WEST
As London except 1.05pm HTV West News and Weather (27:25:41), 1.10 Sportsweek (01:80:67:8), 1.45 UEFA Champions League Special (01:76:51), 2.15 Box Office America (47:39:05:01), 2.25 Astro (78:45:07), 3.00 Baywatch (59:12:11), 4.00 R405 (96:23:54), 4.10 HTV West (26:53:27), 5.05 - 5.30pm HTV West News, Sports Results (88:53:05).

MERIDIAN
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (26:10:5), 1.05 Meridian News and Weather (27:25:41), 1.40 Ant and Dec Presents (1:43:32:54), 2.10 Shuntimers (78:51:32), 3.50 Film: Carry On Heavily (97:10:47:65), 5.05 Meridian News and Weather (88:53:05), 11.50 Film: Downfall (58:53:05), 1.35 Film: The Long Arm (79:57:08), 2.50 Film: Shanghai Joe (49:57:23), 4.30 - 5.30pm Funky Bunker (17:96:4).

WESTCOUNTRY
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (26:10:5), 1.05 Westcountry News, Sports and Weather (27:25:41), 1.40 Ant and Dec Presents (1:43:32:54), 2.10 Shuntimers (78:51:32), 2.50 Anglo (90:01:43), 3.50 seafood DSV (68:12:78:51), 5.05 Westcountry News (88:53:05), 1.35 Film: The Long Arm (79:57:08), 2.50 Film: Shanghai Joe (49:57:23), 4.30 - 5.30pm Funky Bunker (17:96:4).

YORKSHIRE
As London except 12.30pm Movies, Games and Videos (26:10:5), 1.05 Calendar News and Weather (27:25:41), 1.40 Film: The Dent Bunnies (88:53:05), 2.50 Baywatch (59:12:11), 3.05 Calendar News and Weather (88:53:05), 11.50 Scoreline (53:70:55), 11.50 Film: Somebody Has to Shoot the Picture (57:21:05), 1.40 In Bed with Meddler (58:53:05), 2.15 Film: The Dent Bunnies (88:53:05), 2.55 Film: Shanghai Joe (49:57:23), 4.25 Murdoch and Macrone's Movie Club (58:54:39:64), 4.25 Murdoch, Steve Watson (30:10:5), 5.15 - 5.30pm Sound Bites (71:84:16).

CHANNEL 3 SOUTH EAST
As Yorkshire except 1.05pm North East News and Weather (88:53:05), 1.50 - 5.20pm Full Time (53:70:55).

S4C
As 10.40, 10.40am Hangin' wif a Mr Cooper (41:50:1), 10.30 The Three Stooges (53:51:16), 10.50 Film: The Dent Bunnies (88:53:05), 11.00 Film: Guy (26:51:52:59), 2.40 Travel Traps (58:04:38:2), 2.55 Film: End under the Sun (81:95:56:7), 3.20 Live: The Live (76:51), 7.00 Newsday (68:50:00) (18:58:52), 7.15 Nelson the Chief: Ty O'neal, a President, a Cow (58:53:05), 7.25 Film: The Dent Bunnies (88:53:05), 8.50 Pangle (51:84:75), 9.25 Riverside - The New Show (58:53:05), 10.40 Home - Life on the Street (51:72:52), 11.40 Forecast TV (65:46:50), 12.10 Guinness (58:53:05), 12.40, 4.45 - 5.00am The Best Stories (53:82:19).



Satellite/cable

STY 1
7.00am Ocean and Olive (10143).
7.00am Zone Wiley (552959). 8.00 The
Young Indiana Jones Chronicles
(83259). 9.00 Quantum Leap
(36766). 10.00 Kung Fu - The
Legend Continues (95534). 11.00
Legend of the Hidden Valley (785).
11.30 Sea Rescue (56414). 12.00
Wrestling (81056). 1.00 Wrestling
(67476). 2.00 Star Trek (17766).
3.00 Star Trek: The Next Generation
(80000). 4.00 Star Trek: Deep Space
Nine (86037). 5.00 Star Trek: Voy-
ager (2655). 6.00 Kung Fu - The
Legend Continues (70940). 7.00
Hercules: The Legendary Journeys
(80000). 8.00 Hercules: The Legendary
Journeys (6389). 9.00 Celtic (75921).
9.30 The Scarlet Killers (82745).
10.00 Law and Order (12940).
11.00 Law & Order (95653). 12.00 The
Mole Show (39469). 12.30 Royal
(223414). 1.00 Dream On (95457).
1.30 Smouldering Lust (20326).
2.00-6.00am Hit Mix (4008772).

STY 2
The Best Moments of Beverly Hills
90210 (1381018). 8.00 Mid-
west Place (1908759). 9.00 Pacific
Drive (191230). 10.00 Tales from
the Crypt (8846579). 11.00 Tales
from the Crypt (8855327). 11.30
Tales from the Crypt (8855327).
12.00-6.00am Hit Mix (4454964).

MOVIE CHANNEL
6.00am Mysterious Island (89209).
7.00 Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves
(66840). 8.00 Robin Hood: Prince of
Thieves (66840). 9.00 Robin Hood:
Prince of Thieves (66840). 10.00
Lightning Jack (71679). 12.00 Free
Will: 2: The Adventure Home
(76221). 2.00 My Summer Story
(80000). 3.00 My Summer Story
(3679). 6.00 3 Wives Knuckle Up
(21698). 8.00 Free Will: 2: The
Adventure Home (26143). 10.00
10.30 3737666. 1.15
Nostradamus (659418).
6.00am Bad Boy Butty (66433099).
STY MOVIES
6.20am The Ladies' Man
(8622765). 8.00 Howard: A New
Adventure (82740). 9.00
Princess Caraboo (84184265). 11.45
The New Adventures of Pippi Long-
stocking (82740). 12.00 Walk Like
a Man (12582). 3.00 Home
New Breed of Hens (95579). 5.00
Princess Caraboo (41940). 7.00 Gar-
bo Talks (82740). 9.00
The Quick and the Dead (27672).
11.00 Alan Rickman: Intimate
Secrets (31969). 12.30 Rickman
Alan Rickman: Intimate Secrets
Ed (139254). 3.40-6.00am Garbo
Talks (17359104).
STY MOVIES GOLD
6.00am Annie Oakley (8705834).
7.00am Annie Oakley (8705834).

Coming to America (9274389).
12.00 The Believers (22455239).
1.00 The Believers (22455239).
3.00-5.35am How to Steel a Million
(86748493).
STY SPORTS 1
7.00am World Sports (32389). 7.30
Aerobics (44124). 8.00 The Rugby
Club (46018). 8.30 League (44538).
9.00 Super League (28693). 11.00
Super League (28693). 12.00
1.30 Sports Saturday (75018). 2.00
Rugby Union (125298853). 4.15
Sports Saturday Results (3687495).
5.30 One-Day cricket: South Africa vs
Australia (1323834). 6.00 Cricket
Australia vs India - Fourth Test
(215330). 12.00 Davis Cup Tennis
Great Britain v Zimbabwe (51772).
2.00-4.00am Rugby Union (50475).

STY SPORTS 2
7.00am Soccer AM (4126766).
1.00 Australian Rules Football
(8724837). 2.00 Ice Hockey
(8724837). 3.00 Ice Hockey - Tarnier
Great Britain v Zimbabwe (522356).
7.00 Spanish Football (3688037).
9.00-1.00am Golf: USA: Prepost
McDonald: Classic (5008476).

STY SPORTS 3
12.00noon Survival of the Fittest
(86070337). 12.30 Motor Sport
(86070337). 2.00 Snooker
(50763414). 3.00 World Sports
(12525872). 7.00 Snooker: Ches-
le v Arsenal (46775921). 7.00 Snooker:
Chesle v Arsenal (46775921). 7.00
(86075921). 11.00 Survival of the
Fittest (2279105). 11.30-
12.00midnight Cycling (22542292).

LIVE TV
6.00pm Pm Money 6.30 Fashion
7.00am Pm 7.30 Fame of Two
Scarses 8.00 Sham Rock 8.30
Looking for Love 8.45 Pet Squad
9.00 Revelations 9.30 Fashion 1.04
1.00 Looking for Love 1.30
Pet Squad 11.00 Tris TV 11.30 Fo
and Fortune 12.00 Why Files? 12.30
Agency 1.00 Agency 1.15 Agency 1.30
Agency 1.45 Agency 1.55 Agency
2.00 Fame and Fortune 3.30
Money 4.00 Looking for Love 4.30
Sham Rock 5.00 Agency 5.30
Why Files? 6.00 Agency 6.30
7.00 Pm Money 7.30 A Game of
Two Scarses 8.00 Bushido 8.30 Bushido
9.00 Handy Hunkies: Sham Rock 9.30
The Sex-Sensations: Pup Show
10.00 Tipples 10.30 in Society
10.30 Stand-Up 11.00 Tipples Drama
In Space: Fate and Fortune 11.30 Kiss
TV 11.55 Erotic Exotica 12.30 Kiss TV
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